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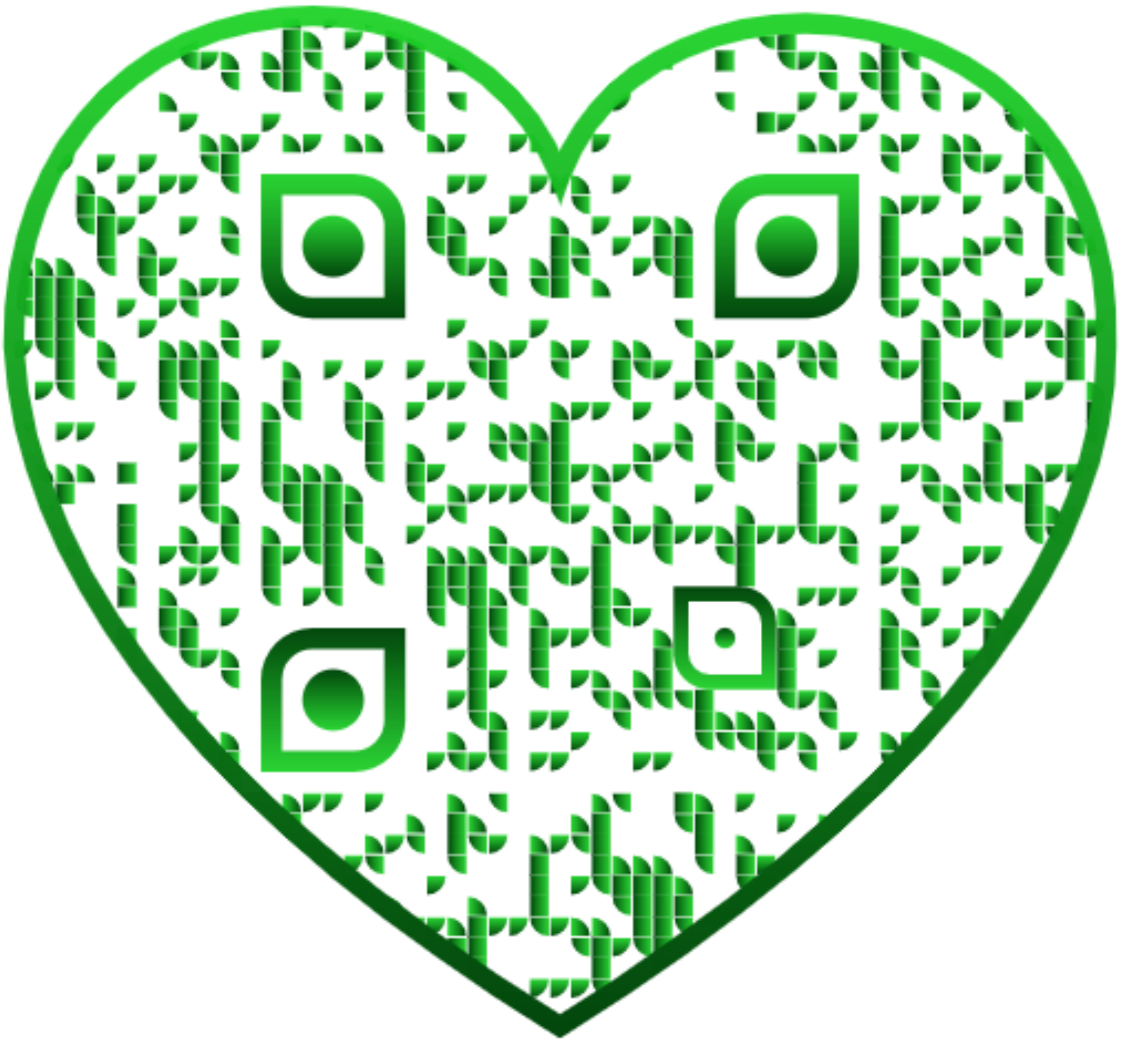
Queen

A Night At The Opera

50 years on: Brian May and Roger Taylor on Queen's operatic masterpiece

FUTURE

ISSUE 346



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"We knew that if the next album didn't succeed, the ship would sink."

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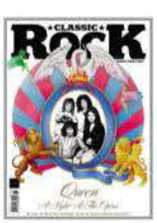
Figaro-oh-oh-oh! Oh boy, do we have a royally jam-packed issue this month! Yep, hard as it may be to believe, but October (Halloween, to be specific) marks the 50th anniversary of the original release of Queen's epic single *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Undoubtedly one of rock's Dead Sea Scrolls, it's not hyperbole to say that *Bo Rhap* changed the course of the band's career and popular music as we know it. This issue we celebrate it and the making of the groundbreaking album from whence it came – Queen's *A Night At The Opera* – in the company of Sir Brian May and Roger Taylor. Both single and album are about to be re-released on vinyl, so I do wonder if we might have another *Bo Rhap* No.1 on our hands this year?

Also in the issue: we chat to Scorpions about their 60 years in rock; get the story behind UFO's sojourn to Montserrat to record *No Place To Run* with George Martin; go behind the scenes of Tom Petty's deeply personal *Wildflowers* album; Ann and Nancy Wilson tell us about the making of Heart's debut record and much more besides.

Until next month...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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This month's contributors

DAVE EVERLEY
Former *CR* Dep Ed 'Diamond' Dave Everley has been busy again for us this month, collaring Queen's Sir Brian May and Roger Taylor for our *A Night At The Opera* 50th-anniversary fandango (p24). Dave has been writing about music since the early 90s and has written for *Metal Hammer, Louder, Prog, The Observer, Select, Mojo, the Evening Standard* and the totally legendary *Ultrakill*.

JAAN UHELSZKI
One of the first women to work in rock journalism, Jaan got her start alongside Lester Bangs, Ben Edmonds and Dave Marsh – considered the 'dream team' of rock writing at *Creem* in the mid-70s. This issue she got under the skin of Tom Petty's *Wildflowers* (p50). She spoke with Petty many times over the years. In fact the first piece of Jaan's we published in *CR* a million years ago was an interview with Tom. What goes around comes around...

MIKE CHIPPERFIELD
Design company Magic Torch is Mike Chipperfield and Sam Williams, two illustrators who live and breathe a love of music despite having zero musical talent between them! This month it was put upon Mike to make the *A Night At The Opera* art work as a magazine cover. "It was a real challenge to disassemble and add detail sensitively without diminishing the original – we hope we succeeded!" he says.

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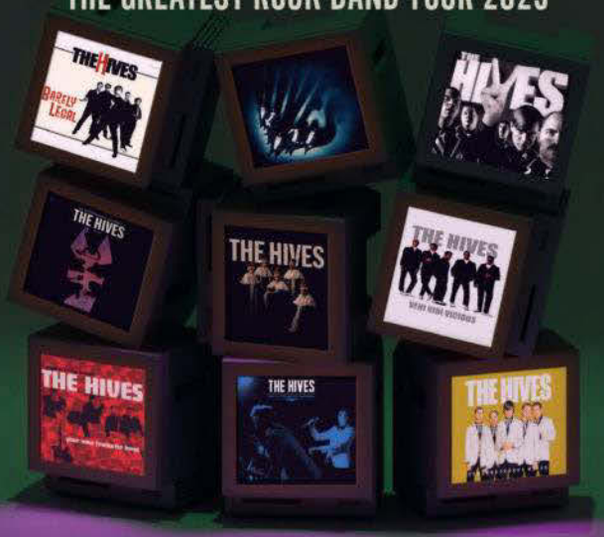

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The Hologram Man

New book offers stunning portraits of the stars.

A new book celebrates the work of British contemporary artist Chris Levine, whose portraits of musical celebrities, including Sir Elton John, Grace Jones and U2's Bono, and also the late Queen Elizabeth II, are created using lights and lasers instead of traditional mediums.

"A hologram is a form of laser photography, and I work with a lenticular process which creates a 3-D image, essentially from a camera that moves along a track taking different perspectives," Levine explains of the process used to create such works. "Your eyes only see two of fifty images going from left to right. See them all at once and it looks like a blur, but it all comes together if you get the geometry right and put a particular lens over it."

Most of Levine's images require tranquillity from his subjects. "I try to get them into a meditative state," he says. "That's how I capture their inner beauty, their inner truth. I like to call them 'inner selfies'.

Levine's reputation took on a new weight when he applied the process to Queen Elizabeth. "When I worked with Her Majesty, she was happy to sit perfectly still," he relates. "I received a call the week before the session, asking what she should wear, so I got to go through her wardrobe and style the outfit. I even chose the crown and pearls that she wore. Looking back on it now, it all seems completely crazy."

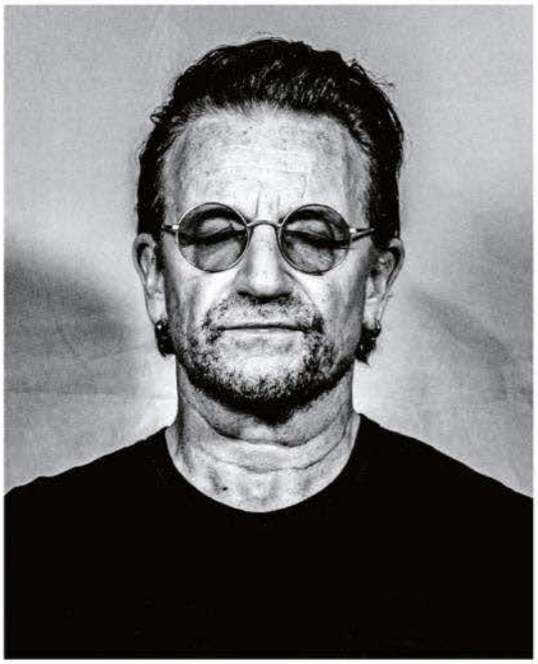
Apart from the subjects featured in the book, titled *Inner Light: The Portraiture Of Chris Levine*, the portrait artist has a hit-list of names whose image he would like to capture in his unique way.

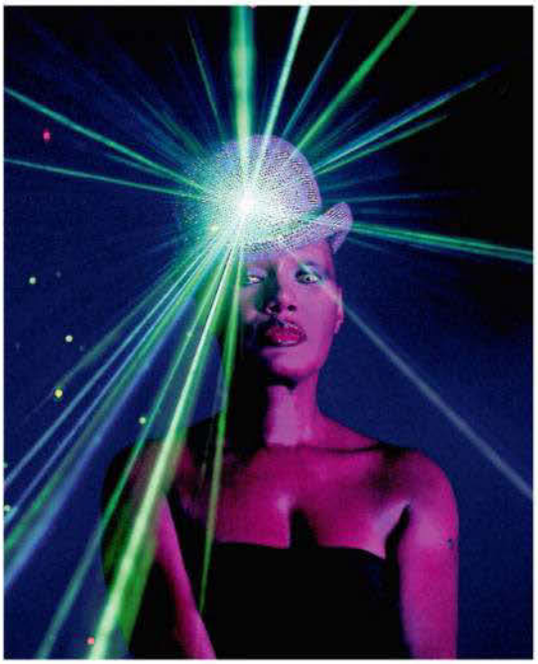
"I'd love to have shot Bowie, and because I had a good interaction with him that went back to art school I was due to have done so just before he passed," Levine confides. "Hopefully I will be shooting the King later this year. One musician that I'd really love to work with is Björk. Also the Rolling Stones, of course. They've never looked more lived-in than they do right now. That would be a great honour."

So the new book could be the first in a series?

"I think so. I'm totally open to that prospect." **DL**

Inner Light: The Portraiture Of Chris Levine, written by Helen Chislett, is published on October 21 by Prestel.





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SIR ELTON JOHN

"This was to mark his retirement, at the end of the *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* tour. I shot it at his house in Windsor. I got Elton into a meditative state. As I took the portrait, there was a speaker beneath his chair set to the frequency of Om, and he became so chilled he actually nodded off."

BONO

"I was doing a shoot in West London and didn't realise that U2 were in the studio next door. I shot my individual portraits of the band when they played their gig at Twickenham. When Bono saw my 3-D picture of him, he said it was like having an out-of-body experience."

GRACE JONES

"I got a call asking if I would like to be a lighting designer for Grace at the Meltdown Festival in London in 2010. Which isn't my natural gig, but of course I was up for that. The photo was taken with her wearing an amazing crystal bowler hat with a laser suspended directly above her. When she started to sing *Love Is The Drug*, the beam came down and refracted shards of light everywhere. It looked fucking insane."

THE QUEEN

"We connected so well that the Queen gave me a second sitting, during which she was much more relaxed. The return visit was never a part of the commission, which I must add came out of the blue. When I got a first phone call, I thought it was my friend Steve pulling my leg. But no, the session happened at Buckingham Palace in a room that I chose."

This issue The Dirt was compiled by Merlin Alderslade, Bill DeMain, Niall Doherty, Jerry Ewing, Rich Hobson, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, David Sinclair, Henry Yates

RIP

Thank you... and good night.

Mark Volman

April 19, 1947 – September 5, 2025

Los Angelino Mark Volman first found fame during the 1960s as a vocalist with American pop-rock band The Turtles, whose hits included the US chart-topper *Happy Together*. When The Turtles dissolved he teamed up with bandmate Howard Kaylan and the pair, as Phlorescent Leech & Eddie, joined Frank Zappa's band the Mothers Of Invention. Later Flo & Eddie did backing vocals on records by T.Rex, Bruce Springsteen, Alice Cooper and others. Volman was 78 when he died from complications of a blood disease.

Tony Beard

Died September 2025

Singer John Waite was among those who have paid tribute to immensely popular session drummer Tony Beard, whose prodigious talent saw him play with bands and artists including Jeff Beck, Roger Daltrey, Mike + The Mechanics, David Lee Roth, Francis Dunnery, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Foreigner, Mike Oldfield and Hall & Oates. Waite described Beard as "a truly gifted drummer and ultra-solid guy", adding that "Tony will missed by everyone that knew him".

Michael Fisher

Died August 2025

Heart are mourning the passing of their former manager and sound engineer from the 1970s. The brother of the band's guitarist Roger Fisher, Michael Fisher was also in a relationship with singer Ann Wilson during that period. He was the 'Magic Man', the inspiration for the band's first US Top 10 hit single, with that title, in 1975. "He was a beautiful human... profound soul... divine spirit. Bon voyage, my old love," Wilson wrote on Instagram.

Ian Ellis

October 7, 1944 – August 4, 2025

Edinburgh-born Ian Ellis was the bass player with Savoy Brown between 1975 and '78, and contributed lead vocals on the band's 1978 album *Savage Return*. He also worked with, among others, Pete Townshend, Alex Harvey, Steve Hackett, Paul Samson, the Mick Clarke Band, Steamhammer, The Tremeloes and Ric Lee from Ten Years After's group The Breakers. Ellis's final years were spent in Rye, East Sussex, where he ran a fortnightly jam night at the Queen's Head.

Atomic Steif

Died September 6, 2025

Born Guido Richter, the drummer known as Atomic Steif played with Sodom, Living Death, Assassin and Holy Moses. News of the passing of the 57-year-old was revealed by Sodom bassist and vocalist Tom Angelripper.

Jim Kimball

Died August 27, 2025

Jim Kimball was the drummer with US band The Jesus Lizard from 1996–98. He was also a member of Mule, Laughing Hyenas and the Denison/Kimball Trio. He was 59 years old.

Bruce Loose

Died September 5, 2025

Bruce Calderwood (pictured) was the bass player and co-lead singer with US punk outfit Flipper from 1979 to 2015. The 66-year-old died of a suspected heart attack.

Antti Tammilehto

November 15, 1954 – July 6, 2025

In a lengthy career, Finnish bass player Antti Tammilehto played with many acts including rock'n'rollers The Boys, Juice Leskinen Grand Slam and the Kalle Kiwes Blues Band. He was 70 years old.

Allen Blickle

Death reported September 7, 2025

Allen Blickle was the drummer with US metal band Baroness from their inception in 2003 until nine years later when all four members were hospitalised following a bus crash. Blickle left the band the following year, and went on to lead the electronic music project Alpaca and work with Romantic Dividends. He was 42.

Rick Davies

July 22, 1944 – September 6, 2025

Supertramp's keyboard player and vocalist Rick Davies has died at the age of 81 after battling multiple myeloma for more than a decade. As well as contributing soulful vocals, and his unmistakable touch on the Wurlitzer electric piano, Davies wrote several of the group's best-loved songs, including *Bloody Well Right* and *Goodbye Stranger*.

Swindon-born Davies co-founded Supertramp along with bassist, guitarist and vocalist Roger Hodgson in London in 1970. The band broke through with third album *Crime Of The Century* in '74, and *Bloody Well Right* was their first single to make the US Top 40. Five years later the album *Breakfast In America*, which included hit singles *The Logical Song*, the title track and *Goodbye Stranger*, sold 30 million copies worldwide. However, Davies's contributions were often overshadowed by those of Hodgson, who left after a world tour in 1983.

Davies led the band for four more albums. *Brother Where You Bound* (1985) and *Free As A Bird* (1987) were followed by *Some Things Never Change* (1997), and *Slow Motion*, the band's swansong, was released in 2002.

Throughout, a deal struck after Hodgson's exit continued to strain relations between the pair. They had agreed that Davies would keep the band name, while Hodgson would retain control over the songs he wrote for the band. But within the decade, Davies's Supertramp were playing shows that included Hodgson's songs.

"I felt betrayed," said Hodgson. "If Rick hadn't done that, it's very likely that we'd have done something together [again] at some point."

"Rick and Roger met up and tried to get something together, prior to us touring in 2010," saxophonist John Helliwell told *Prog* magazine in 2012. "But negotiations failed, so Roger wasn't around on that. My opinion on it all is: it's possible, but doubtful, that they would get together on a tour like that. But it would be nice to have a reunion of just the five of us. I'm up for it."

Helliwell, bassist Dougie Thomson and drummer Bob Siebenberg sued Hodgson and Davies in 2021. Two years later, Davies settled out of court. A US appeals court ruled that Hodgson must share royalties with his former bandmates.

"I knew Rick for fifty-two years," said Helliwell. "He shaped my life in many ways, notably musically. His talent for writing and playing was boundless – he was the finest musician I have known.

"When Rick played, it was always absolutely spot-on, from the heart, and with precise timing – no frills – he captured the very essence of the music that he usually had composed himself," added Helliwell. "I feel honoured to have known and played with him." **FL/DL**

Brent Hinds

January 16, 1974 – August 20, 2025

Former Mastodon guitarist Brent Hinds has died following a motorcycle accident. The 51-year-old was riding a Harley-Davidson in his home town of Atlanta when the driver of an SUV failed to yield while making a turn at an intersection.

Hinds was a founding member of Mastodon, whose incendiary mash-up of riff-heavy sludge-metal and expansive, progressively minded songwriting saw them become one of the breakout metal bands of the 2000s.

Earlier this year, Mastodon and Hinds parted company, the first line-up change in the group's 25-year history. The split initially seemed amicable, but things soon turned sour as Hinds hurled some barbed comments via social media.

However, a statement from Mastodon following Hinds's death described the band's mood as "a state of unfathomable sadness and grief." It continued: "Last night Brent passed away as a result of a tragic accident. We are heartbroken, shocked, and still trying to process the loss of this creative force with whom we've shared so many triumphs, milestones, and the creation of music that has touched the hearts of so many. Our hearts are with Brent's family, friends and fans. We please ask that you respect everyone's privacy during this difficult time." **MA**

RICK DAVIES: FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS. BRENT HINDS: JUSTIN BORUCKI. BRUCE LOOSE: RUBY RAN/GETTY IMAGES

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"Cynical" and "nauseating"

The Darkness brothers slam MTV VMA's Ozzy tribute.

The Darkness guitarist Dan Hawkins has gone viral for dismissing the tribute to Ozzy Osbourne at the MTV Video Music Awards – which featured Yungblud, Aerosmith's Joe Perry and Steven Tyler and Nuno Bettencourt from Extreme – as "another nail in the coffin of rock 'n' roll".

Writing on Instagram, he called the performance: "Cynical, nauseating and more importantly; shit". Seemingly referring to Yungblud, he added: "[It] makes me sick how people jump on this shit to further their own careers."

After the comments stirred up a hornet's nest, Dan's brother and Darkness bandmate, singer Justin branded 28-year-old Yungblud, among the sensations of Black Sabbath's Back To The Beginning show, as "the latest in a long line of – I'm sorry to say it – poseurs".

"What irks musicians of a certain age is that Yungblud seems to have positioned himself as a natural heir to the Ozzy legacy, having nothing to do with the really important stuff," Justin continued on his podcast *Justin Hawkins Rides Again*. **DL**

Target: Yungblud (left, with Tyler and Perry at the VMAs).

Radiohead Confirm Shows

Four London dates part of 20-show European run.

Radiohead have announced their first live dates for seven years. The band will play a run of 20 shows which will take place in five cities across Europe in November and December. The dates include four in the UK, all of them at London's O2 Arena, on November 21, 22, 24 and 25, as well as shows in Madrid, Bologna, Copenhagen and Berlin.

Radiohead's last live performance was on August 1, 2018, in Philadelphia, concluding their *A Moon Shaped Pool* tour.

"Last year we got together to rehearse, just for the hell of it," explains drummer Philip Selway. "After a seven-year pause it felt really good to play the songs again and reconnect with a musical identity that has become lodged deep inside all five of us. It also made us want to play some shows together. We hope you can make it to one of the upcoming dates. For now it will just be these, but who knows where this will all lead." **JE**

NEWS

Rob Halford is considering making an album of Tony Bennett cover versions. The Judas Priest singer is a huge fan of the late jazz and pop crooner, who passed in 2023 aged 96. "I'm an old man, I can do what I fucking want!" says Halford, aged 73. "And I love Tony Bennett."

Mötley Crüe frontman **Vince Neil** has revealed that he had a stroke in December that left doctors doubting he would ever perform again. "I had to learn to walk again," he states. "It's been tough, but I'm back ninety-five per cent to where I was before, and it's going to be great."

Andy Summers and Stewart Copeland, formerly the guitarist and drummer respectively in **The Police**, are suing their former bandmate Sting over the band's 1983 smash hit *Every Breath You Take*. A source close to the pair says: "They say they are owed millions in lost royalties".

Jack Osbourne has responded fiercely to Roger Waters after the former Pink Floyd man accused his late father Ozzy of purveying "idiocy and nonsense" on TV. "My father always thought you were a c**t – thanks for proving him right," said Osbourne.

A massively expanded version of the **Jimi Hendrix Experience**'s (pictured) 1967 album *Axis: Bold As Love* is released on November 7. Available as a 5LP/4CD + Blu-ray box set, it adds a plethora of material including 40 studio and live tracks, 28 of which are previously unreleased.

YUNGBLUD, STEVEN TYLER AND JOE PERRY: ARTURO HOLMES/GETTY IMAGES FOR MTV; JIMI HENDRIX: INGO FORSBERG © AUTHENTIC HENDRIX, LLC; THE LEMONHEADS: GARETH JONES/PRESS

WELCOME BACK

The Lemonheads

After almost two decades they return with a new album, with Evan Dando now straight and "in heaven".

"I'm happy, I'm good, I'm doing the thing every night," says Evan Dando of The Lemonheads, on tour in advance of *Love Chant*, his band's first album of new material in 19 years. A maelstrom of melody and marauding guitars, it sounds both adolescent and grown-up – a lot like Dando himself. Now happily remarried and residing in Brazil, the rumpled and jovial 58-year-old acknowledges that the ghosts - and addictions - of his wild youth hover nearby. Or as he sings on *In The Margin*: *'If periphery is what you give, I'll leave you in the margin where I live.'* Zooming from a hotel room in Dublin, he says: "I have some rules I gotta abide by, and everything's gonna be cool."

The Lemonheads have 70 dates between now and December - that's a lot of roadwork.
True. But look at Bob Dylan! He's still out there doing it. Once it gets in your system it's impossible to get it out. We've been playing a bunch of shows in a row over here, and sometimes I can't hit the notes. People get up in arms about this shit, complaining about it on the internet. I'm like: "Dudes, you should have seen us in '93, we were so much worse. I lost my voice every night back then [laughs]."

You sound really energised on the album.
Thanks, I love this record. We did it in Brazil, with Apollo Nove producing, at a studio that he built, and I think we nailed it. We had a lot of guests – Juliana Hatfield, J. Mascis, John from The Blake Babies. All my friends. We also had John Lennon's compressor from *Imagine* on all the vocals!

The opening track, *58 Seconds*, really captures the upside-down world we're living in.
It's like some demented sailor thing, a Charles Manson sea shanty [laughs]. It's whimsical, weird, a little bit rocking and a little bit all over the place. So we had to put the song first, to tell people: "Okay, strap in. This ain't gonna be all biscuits and gravy."

And now you've moved to Brazil. From your social media, it looks idyllic.
I feel like I died in the fentanyl epidemic because I'm in heaven now [laughs]. I love Brazil. And it's been good for my songwriting, and my painting [Dando did the colourful sleeve of *Love Chant*]. I got married at the end of last year, and now I'm a stepdad. Also, I got off heroin. Heroin disconnects you, makes you really afraid of death and stuff. It's creepy as fuck. I didn't want to feel that any more. A lot of my friends died from it, but I'm okay now. I got my track marks, but I don't want to do that Charlie Parker thing any more.

"I got off heroin. It's creepy as fk. I didn't want to feel that any more."**

How has your relationship with your fans changed since the nineties?
The way I see it, the internet's never satisfied. It wants content. And I get real tired of feeding stuff into that void. You have to do it, for the fans, I guess. So I'll try it for a little while longer. But if nothing changes, I'm not gonna do it any more.

What can you tell us about your upcoming memoir, *Rumours Of My Demise*?
The book is just a long magazine article to promote the album [laughs]. It's pretty bad as far as facts go and shit. The pictures are the best thing in it. But I'll be reading the audio book myself. I made sure to yell and scream every night for a week, so I could do it with a sexy voice [laughs]. **BDM**

Love Chant is out on October 24 via Fire Records.

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Dino Jelusick is a Croation rock singer, musician and songwriter who was born in 1992. At first he was the lead singer for "Animal Drive" before progressing on to a member of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. He has since worked with Robert Plant, David Coverdale, Michael Romeo, Jeff Scott Soto, Mike Portnoy, and Kip Winger, Khalil Turk & Friends "Turkish Delight" amongst many others. He has been very active these last few years and has gained a huge following not only in his own country but globally.

2023's "Follow the blind man" was hailed as one of the best rock albums of that year and was released by Escape Music on both CD and Vinyl.

Jelusick have a knack of breathing fresh life into the world of rock music and the new album "Apolitical Ecstasy" is no exception to the rule. From opener "Jaws of life" to the title track there is everything for the discerning rock fan.

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“Phoebe Jane was like a caged animal let loose. She’s too good to be doing BVs for ever.”

★ HIGH HOPES

Hollow Souls

Kris Barras launches a new group informed by his time in Supersonic Blues Machine.

When guitarist/singer Kris Barras set out to reconnect with his blues-rock roots, he didn’t just retrace old steps, he lit a fresh fuse. The result is Hollow Souls, with a new line-up fronted by rising star Phoebe Jane and featuring supercharged guest performances, and built to be a band as spontaneous as it is soulful.

The idea for the Devon-based group took hold when Barras and his long-time producer (“and best friend”) Josiah J Manning gathered with musician friends for a jam at Momentum Studios in Plymouth. “I’ve been edging towards heavier territory with the Kris Barras Band,” says Barras, “but I missed the rawness of the early bluesier material. I didn’t want it to affect what I was doing with KBB, so I started something separate.”

With bassist Leighton Allen and drummer Joe Harris on board, Barras and Manning worked and jammed through riffs and melodies, capturing everything as live. Typical of the process was *Bad Things*, which became the band’s third single. “That was literally the fourth time we’d ever played that song,” Barras says.

But he didn’t want to sing lead. Instead he turned to a familiar but underused talent. “I’ve known Phoebe Jane for over a decade; she sang backing vocals for us on the *Light It Up* [2019] tour,” Barras says. “But she was too good to be doing BVs for ever.”

Jane, who is a big fan of Steven Tyler, recalls: “Kris called me up and said do I want to try something. I wasn’t sure at first. I’ve sung my whole life, but never like this. Our first show was the Maid Of Stone festival in July in front of thousands.”

“She was like a caged animal let loose,” Barras says, grinning. “She commanded the stage like she’d been doing it for ever.”

The *Hollow Souls* EP also features a series of guest appearances including Jon ‘Marv’ Harvey (formerly of Monster Truck), Chris Tapp of The Cold Stares, Jared James Nichols and Elles Bailey. Most of the collaborations were remote and fast. “We sent them rough demos, let them put their stamp on it.”

Live, the line-up is just the core band, with Barras and Jane covering their own and the guest parts. “It’s still full-on,” Jane says. “Nothing feels missing. It’s loud, loose, and a lot of fun.”

Touring kicks off in October with a run of UK dates accompanied by Troy Redfern. Further plans are open-ended, but Hollow Souls might offer a way for Barras to return to festivals and venues that no longer fit KBB’s heavier direction. “We’ve had to turn down a lot of blues-based bookings,” he says. “This gives us a way back.”

As for Jane? “I feel supported – and pushed – in all the right ways. It’s exciting. I’m just ready to see where it all goes.” **DS**

The Hollow Souls EP is out now (self-released). Hollow Souls tour the UK from October 16 to November 9.

FOR FANS OF...

Hollow Souls share the same sort of livewire energy and vintage-meets-modern swagger that Rival Sons brought to the table with their 2011 breakout album *Pressure & Time*. Barras agrees, explaining: “They recorded that one live in the room with fuzzed-up guitar sounds. It’s a very similar approach to how we’ve gone about it.”

ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

"Foo Fighters Assemble!"

Looks like the rebooted band have returned to the studio.

In what can only be termed an eventful year for the band, Foo Fighters are back recording. Drummer Josh Freese was 'released' in May, a decision that left him "shocked and disappointed", then in July, the Foos hired Nine Inch Nails drummer Ilan Rubin as Freese's replacement, with Freese then replacing Rubin in Trent Reznor's band.

In July Foo Fighters also shared two 'new' songs, the first a cover of *I Don't Wanna Hear It* by Washington DC hardcore legends Minor Threat which had been stored in their vaults, without Dave Grohl's vocals, since 1995, the second an original titled *Today's Song*, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Foos as a band.

Now it appears the sextet have reconvened at Grohl's 606 Studio to begin a follow-up to 2023's *But Here We Are* album. A photo of the musicians gathered in a circle, displaying only their legs, was accompanied by the caption: "Foo Fighters Assemble! Make sure you're subscribed to the newsletter for info you won't want to miss... just sayin'..." **PB**

Dee Snider says the Sister tour is not about money.

Twisted Sister To Hit The Road

Dee Snider and co. to reunite for a world tour in 2026.

A decade after a supposedly 'final' show in Monterrey, Mexico, on the US group's Forty And Fuck It tour, Twisted Sister will tour the world again in 2026. Three members of their best-known line-up – frontman Dee Snider and guitarists Jay Jay French and Eddie 'Fingers' Ojeda – will be joined by bassist Russell Pzütto, who has played in Snider's solo band, and Joey 'Seven' Franco, their drummer between 1986 and '87. The absence of long-serving bassist Mark 'The Animal' Mendoza is, according to Snider, due to "irreconcilable differences".

Given that Snider has criticised other bands for reactivating again after farewell tours, the announcement attracted some cynicism. However, Snider insists the move is not about money.

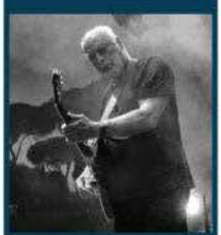
"It really isn't. It's because we want to do it one more time, and there's interest from all over the world," he told broadcaster Eddie Trunk, adding: "If you're lucky enough to be in a band that people still want to see after fifty years, how can you not answer the call?" Snider adds. **DL**

NEWS

Bon Jovi release a so-called 'legendary edition' of last year's *Forever* album on October 24. As well as a new opening track, *Red, White & Jersey*, the revamp adds cameos from Def Leppard's Joe Elliott, Bruce Springsteen, Robbie Williams, Marcus King, Avril Lavigne and more.

Robert Plant has admitted that fronting Led Zeppelin was "really nerve-racking". In conversation with radio presenter Mark Radcliffe, he said: "That group was like the weather. It could be extraordinarily good, or on the other hand perhaps not quite so magnificent. It wasn't sent down from the gods every day, every week."

According to **Nikki Sixx**, being a rock star is "overrated". "Being on the road is not for me for too much longer," says Mötley Crüe's 66-year-old bassist, who plans to turn his attention to projects that don't involve a lot of touring. "I have a six-year-old girl to raise and five wonderful older kids and a granddaughter to spend time with."



David Gilmour (pictured) hopes to issue a new album "within the next year or two". Talking about following last September's *Luck And Strange*, the guitarist tells *Rolling Stone*: "I'm slowly building up towards [it]. I have quite a bit of material that is in some sort of formative stage."

Veteran Chicagoan power-poppers **Cheap Trick** release their twenty-first album, *All Washed Up*, via BMG on November 14.

WELCOME BACK

Paradise Lost

The goth-metal progenitors and all-round prophets of doom cast a cautiously optimistic eye on the future.

Credited with coining the term 'gothic metal' with 1991's *Gothic*, Paradise Lost have enjoyed three decades as a beloved – if somewhat cult – metal sensation. In that time they've explored everything from death-doom (a genre they also helped pioneer) to synth-driven goth with an enduring sense of adventure that has seen them consistently reinvent themselves without losing sight of what made them magic in the first place.

New album *Ascension* continues a stellar run of form that began with 2015's *The Plague Within*. But in a rare spot of optimism from chief miserabilist and vocalist Nick Holmes, he assures us the best is yet to come.

It's five years since the last Paradise Lost record. What was the hold-up?

We got sidetracked. We decided to do Host [Nick and guitarist Greg Mackintosh's synth-driven goth side-project with echoes of PL's 1999 album *Host*], so that filled a gap, and we shelved a few songs that we eventually came back to. We re-recorded *Icon* ['93], too, so that took some more time out. Afterwards we decided we wanted to try and get some of the flavour of that album in this one too, capture some of our youthful selves.

The band have done quite a bit of revisiting albums for shows – *Gothic* and *Icon* at Damnation Festival, *Draconian Times* at Bloodstock...

I quite enjoy revisiting some of those things. A lot of it is from such a long time ago, and we've got some fond memories of when we actually had memories. It's fun to tap into that stuff and see if you can still do it. But after all these albums and all these years, we still don't think we've done our best album. If you start thinking your best album was in your first five years, you might as well not bother.

What was it about Yorkshire in the late eighties and early nineties that made it such a fertile breeding ground for miserable bands?

I don't know, really. My Dying Bride always say about the dark satanic mills, which is fair enough. It pisses down a lot, so that might have something to do with it too. But you've got to be able to laugh, especially in our field, where so many things can go wrong constantly.

What are your favourite memories of the years when goth-metal first started blowing up?

I believe it was at Monsters Of Rock, the record label had dyed all of our food black. Black sandwiches! The colour meant nothing looked nice. It was a nice idea – goth to the extreme – but didn't really work.

> **"The record label had dyed all of our food black. Black sandwiches!"**

Later this year the band are playing in Bradford with New Model Army and Terrorvision. That's quite a musically varied bill.

We've known all those guys for years. We've all got our own separate followings, so it should be one big happy family of all these different people.

Other than a Spiñal Tap-like propensity to lose drummers, Paradise Lost's line-up has remained remarkably static. What's the secret to longevity?

We started off with righteous intentions – it was all about music. That's never really died. And we always have a laugh. We went out in Leeds drinking with a limousine to celebrate ten years of the band. Now that feels like nothing. You just don't realise how fast time goes. **RH**

Ascension is available now via Nuclear Blast. Paradise Lost are currently touring the UK, with the last date on October 17.

DAVID GILMOUR © JILL FURMANOVSKY ARCHIVE

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November 9th	Kings Hall, Herne Bay
November 13th	Lawrence Batley Theatre, Huddersfield
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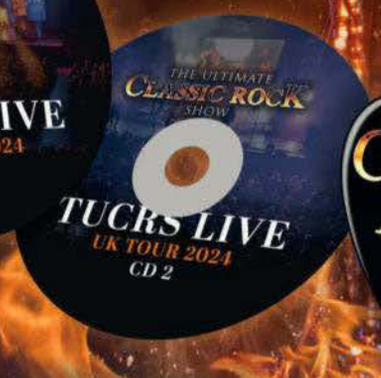

"When I moved to Birmingham, I assumed every band was going to sound like Black Sabbath."

★ HIGH HOPES

Margarita Witch Cult

Meet the big-riffing Brummie rockers keeping Black Sabbath's traditions alive.

Upon hearing the first 10 seconds of any Margarita Witch Cult song, one thing becomes apparent: these guys love Black Sabbath. But while they acknowledge a debt to their fellow Brummies, they're keen not to be lumped as just another Birmingham band.

"Birmingham is always shedding its skin," bassist Jim Thing explains. "We've been around long enough to have seen things like [mid-2010s indie scene] B-Town, where bands like Superfood were going to be the next big thing. The older you get, you become more aware of the pitfalls of aligning yourself too much with a particular scene. We wanted to do our own thing."

Each band member – vocalist/guitarist 'Screamin' Scott Vincent, bassist Jim and drummer George Casual – had played in other bands before MWC formed in 2020. While Sabs are an obvious influence, it was actually another pioneering stoner group that helped kickstart their careers: Monster Magnet. Vincent's other band Table Scraps toured with Dave Wyndorf's psychedelic warriors in 2019, and when he got back from that tour he knew he wanted to do something riffier and heavier.

Margarita Witch Cult's 2023 self-titled debut album built on a Sabbath template with lashings of Motörhead and Alice Cooper, and Vincent admits that the pop-rock chops of Desmond Child also had a hand in his songwriting approach. It paid off. Their brand of rumbling thunder quickly picked up a fan base, and even came somewhat full-circle when they were invited to support Monster Magnet last year.

"I can call Dave Wyndorf a mate," Vincent marvels. "I was listening to Monster Magnet when I was seventeen, and now he's covered one of my songs [Monster Magnet covered *Motorcycle (Straight To Hell)* by Table Scraps in 2021]."

Wyndorf isn't the only heavyweight rock star to endorse MWC. Back in June, the band were interviewed and featured as part of the livestream for the Black Sabbath: Back To The Beginning show.

"With everything that's happened since [with Ozzy's passing] you realise just how big that was," Vincent says. "Being part of it in any way was incredible. It was amazing watching ourselves on an iPhone in a bar in Dresden."

Margarita Witch Cult are clearly going places. With their new album *Strung Out In Hell*, they've honed the Sabbathian template even further.

"We considered just calling it 'More', because we didn't change the scenery too much, [we] just leaned in on what worked before," Jim Thing says.

"When I moved to Birmingham as a teenager, I assumed every band was going to sound like Black Sabbath," Vincent admits. "It took twenty-five years for me to make one that actually did." **RH**

Strung Out In Hell is out now via Heavy Psych Sounds.

FOR FANS OF...

"Our new album is probably most similar to *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*," Scott Vincent says. "It's got a bit more variation and punch than the more jammy stuff. We actually ended up playing songs instrumentally at one gig because a promoter wanted us to play for an hour and forty. It was like: 'We've only got one album!'"

Counting Crows

Mr. Jones

A song that the band's still-sozzled singer Adam Duritz wrote immediately after (and about) a wild night out, it became radio staple, a huge hit and their signature song.

Words: **Niall Doherty**

In the years before Counting Crows became one of the biggest success stories of the mid-90s, frontman and chief songwriter Adam Duritz was a man of many bands. The Baltimore-born and California-raised singer was into all sorts of music, so he played all sorts of music. There was The Mod-L Society, who specialised in jangly power-pop, a psychedelic rock crew called The Himalayans, and the atmospheric new wave of Sordid Humor, for whom he provided backing vocals. There were even a few different versions of Counting Crows before the one that he hit the jackpot via their 1993 debut album *August And Everything After*. An album that sounds like *Automatic For The People*-era R.E.M. in confession, its stirring mix of emotive ballads, contemplative alt.rock and hook after melodic hook sold more than seven million copies.

As he bounced from project to project, Duritz was writing and quietly stockpiling the collection of songs that would go on to be radio-conquering hits over the course of a few years in the early 90s– *Round Here, Rain King, Omaha,* and *Mr. Jones*, the song that would become Counting Crows' debut single.

"*Mr. Jones* and *Omaha* were both songs I brought to other bands I was in, and we ended up not doing them cos they didn't feel great in those bands," he recalls. "*Round Here* was a Himalayans song originally."

Mr. Jones was born of a wild night on the tiles in San Francisco's Mission District with his friend and Himalayans bandmate the titular Marty Jones. The reason they were out, he explains, is that Jones's father David, who lived in Spain, was over in the US performing. "He'd become one of the iconic flamenco guitar players in Madrid, and was playing with his old flamenco troupe who he'd played with many years before," says Duritz. "There were singers, dancers, musicians, a whole bunch of people who were all part of the scene, and they played this show and it was fucking outrageous."

After the show, Duritz and Marty moved through the gears, swaggering from bar to bar, revelling in the excitement. "It was a crazy night. There's flamenco dancers who are insanely hot. Marty was talking to one of them whose name was Maria, a really sexy woman, who knew his parents when he was born," Duritz says, explaining the '*black-haired flamenco dancer*' mentioned in the song.

The central theme of the song – that everything would be fixed for Duritz and his pal, and they could unlock their inner super-selves, if only they could make it in music – was cemented when Duritz spotted Chris Isaak's drummer Kenny Dale Johnson cosied up in one of the bar's boothes with three women.

"I remember looking at him and thinking: 'Man, if we were rock stars we'd be able to talk to women,'" he says, laughing. "The truth is it's still hard!"

"I remember being in a strip club and *Mr. Jones* comes on, and I was like: 'No, no! Not to this song!'"

Instead, Duritz turned to what came a little more naturally: getting through the door in the early hours and documenting the night in song.

"I remember going home and needing to go to work [on it] right away," he says of the song's creation. "I've never been one of those people who wrote over chunks of time, I used to just sit down and do it and I'd stick with it until it was done."

While that part came quickly, recording *Mr. Jones* was another matter – a "real struggle", says Duritz. Chief among the issues was that drummer Steve Bowman hated it.

"He got it in his head that it was a country song," says Duritz. "He was really up in arms about it, like: 'I didn't fucking sign up to play country music. I might as well wear a cowboy hat and stick a piece of straw in my mouth!' He was really anti the song. It affected the way he played it. He's a great drummer, but he just had this blind spot where *Mr. Jones* was."

Producer T Bone Burnett brought in someone else to play drums, but there was also the problem that Duritz was struggling to nail a good vocal take. "I must have done it fifty or sixty times," he remembers. It ended up being one of the last tracks to be completed.

After finally nailing a vocal take, Duritz had no idea the song might be a hit. *Rain King* and *Round Here* had been pencilled in for that status. *Mr. Jones* became the band's introductory single only because they refused to edit the label's first choice, the shuffling, epic grooves of *A Murder Of One*.

While Duritz credits a performance of *Round Here* in early 1994 as key to Counting Crows' breakthrough, a few months later he realised it was *Mr. Jones* that had become their calling card.

"After *SNL* [*Saturday Night Live*], it got pretty big on the radio," he says. "By that summer, when we were playing, there was a lot of people who wanted to hear *Mr. Jones*. It seemed like the audience was there for *Mr. Jones*. But I noticed that more after the fact. I didn't notice it blowing the record up, I just noticed that once the record blew up, *Mr. Jones* was really big. That was the song that radio could play over and over again, because it was shorter than *Round Here*."

As *August And Everything After* became one of those albums that kept selling and selling, *Mr. Jones* became one of those songs you heard everywhere, as Duritz can attest: "I remember being in a strip club in New Orleans and *Mr. Jones* comes on, and I was like: 'No, no, this is not the vibe. Not to this song!' I don't mind getting a dance every now and then, but not to my song. That is not okay."

The success that Duritz had yearned for in that very track had finally arrived. His music was everywhere, whether he liked it or not.

Counting Crows tour the UK from October 23 to November 1.

GENERATION JONES

Mr. Jones is said to have influenced the naming of Generation Jones, a term coined by US cultural commentator Jonathan Pontell in reference to those born between 1954 and 1965. Pontell argued that they were a half-generation too different to both their elder, fellow baby boomers and their Generation X successors, and needed their own group to belong to. Some illustrious figures born in the time frame have agreed, with Barack Obama declaring himself the "first Generation Jones president". Duritz apparently said he was honoured by his song's association with the term.

DAVE TONGE/GETTY IMAGES

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
December 1993

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.28,
US No.2

PERSONNEL
Adam Duritz
Vocals, piano, harmonica
David Bryson
Guitar, vocals
Charlie Gillingham
Piano
Matt Malley
Bass
Denny Fongheiser
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Adam Duritz & David Bryson

PRODUCED BY
T Bone Burnett

LABEL
Geffen

Keeping up with the *Jones*: Counting Crows in 1994.

Q&A

Eric Gales

The blues-scene guitarist on his record for his late brother, cutting heads with Bonamassa, surviving time behind bars...

Interview: **Henry Yates**

Eric Gales has been the name on guitar connoisseurs' lips for three decades now. Famed as a 90s blues-rock prodigy, but then seemingly throwing it all away with a 2009 jail stretch for drugs and firearms possession, it's been heartening to watch the Memphis guitarist rise again with redemptive Grammy-nominated records such as 2022's *Crown*.

Today, however, Gales wants to swing the spotlight onto his beloved elder brother. A fiery bluesman billed professionally as Little Jimmy King, who also used Eric's unfathomable 'upside-down' guitar technique, Manuel Gales was a hero to those who knew of him, but he died in 2002 of a heart attack before he became a bona fide superstar. Eric aims to change that, he explains, with a star-studded new tribute album that powerfully reignites his late sibling's best songs.

Why did now feel like the right time to record *A Tribute To LJK*?
Well, it had actually been time way before now. This record is my way of giving honour to my older brother, that's been gone for over twenty years now. I decided to do some of his songs, through my eyes, with a 2025 approach, to show the world exactly how badass he was, incorporating some allies and friends of mine. I'm ecstatic with it, man.

For someone who has never heard his music, can you describe your brother's musical vibe?
He played raw, hard-core, straight-up blues, man. No cuttin' corners. He was highly influenced by Albert King and Hendrix. So that's how 'Jimmy King' came up – 'Jimmy' for Jimi Hendrix and 'King' for Albert King. But my brother was his own man and a powerhouse blues player. I grew up on his music. Songs like *Baby Baby* and *You Shouldn't Have Left Me*, I've been listening to those on repeat since back in the day. They were party songs. They just went along with smoking weed and drinking.

What was your relationship like between the two of you? Did he ever do that classic 'big brother' thing of protecting you from the school bullies, for example?
Actually, he did, one time. There was somebody bothering me at school. It got pretty serious. I told my brother, and he came up there and made his point known, not to fuck with his brother no more – in a way that scared this guy half to death. I never had any problems no more.

Your guests on *A Tribute To LJK* range from titans like Buddy Guy to young guns like Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram. How did you choose them?
Buddy Guy is iconic. Just say his name and that's enough. You don't know about music if you don't know who Buddy Guy is. This record is a full-circle moment, because Buddy and my brother had crossed paths, played on shows together. We tracked our solos for *Somebody* in two different cities, but it came across like we were in the room together.

Kingfish has gone on record to say he's influenced by my brother. I love what he did on *Rockin' Horse Ride*. That's a titty-bar sorta song. But all the guitar parts on this record are banging to me, man. I really like the guitar work that me, Joe Bonamassa and Josh Smith did on *It Takes A Whole Lotta Money*. We really gave 'em something to talk about there.

Do you think Manuel's death was a factor in your life going off the rails?
No, because I was already in a tumultuous state before that happened. It may have added to it. But I was already deep into a dark world, finding comfort in things that weren't good for me. At the end of the day, it was a slow grind to a quick death. But thank God I survived, and I stand here now, fifty years old.

Jail must have been really tough. What advice would you give someone for getting through a jail sentence?
Stay to yourself. Be quiet. Don't engage. Don't act like you're bigger than who you are – unless you got a rank or status. Just do your time and go home – if you have a go-home date. Unless you've been there, man, it's hard to describe. You go into prison and it's a different life. And if you're not ready, prepare to be curled up in a corner somewhere.

It's no place for any human being. It's definitely no place for a black man, to be honest with you about it. With that being said, I survived my encounter with the penal institution, and it gave me an insight on life that sat me down for a minute and told me I needed to re-evaluate things. I do believe that it was a purpose served, to stop me doing something far worse to myself. So I think that everything happens for a reason.

What emotions went through you while working on this new album?
A little bit of everything. Thinking about my brother and him not here. But happy that I'm able to make a project that brings memory to him. Excitement. Happiness. Sadness. It overcame me here and there, but I held it together, because I knew there was a job that needed to be done. I'm sure I'll see my brother again. And not only him. I got other family members that's passed on too. And I believe I'll see them again. I'm sure of it.

Mark Tremonti and Dave Navarro are just two who say you're the best guitarist out there. Do you see what all the fuss is about?
That's a hard question, man. I take it as the highest compliment. I put a lot of years and hard work into my craft, man, and for people to have that mindset about me is larger-than-life for me. I turn on YouTube or Instagram and I see, in my opinion, some of the baddest players in the world, doing some stuff that is completely mind-boggling. My mind is flipped upside-down by the stuff I'm seeing. But at the end of the day, when the question gets asked who do they think is the baddest motherfucker in the world, they still say: "Eric Gales." That's huge for me, man.

A Tribute To LJK is released on October 24 via Provogue.

Eric Gales: for many guitar players, the best guitarist out there.

JIM ARBOGAST/PRESS

"I survived my encounter with the penal institution, and it gave me an insight on life."

A Royal Command Performance

Fifty years on, Brian May and Roger Taylor reveal the vision, precision and daring behind **Queen**'s *A Night At The Opera*, the album that rewrote rock's rules.

Words: **Dave Everley**

"And now, on with the opera. Let joy be unconfined. Let there be dancing in the streets, drinking in the saloons, and necking in the parlour."
Groucho Marx in the 1935 film *A Night At The Opera.*

Prologue

Queen are deep into recording their new album at Rockfield Studios in Wales. It's been a tiring couple of days as they attempt to get their heads around an outrageously operatic new song Freddie Mercury has concocted, titled *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

Right now, Mercury and drummer Roger Taylor are taking a break. They're watching an old black-and-white Marx Brothers film on a primitive video player owned by the band's producer Roy Thomas Baker. The film features Groucho Marx in full cigar-brandishing, eyebrow-waggling, wisecracking mode as Otis B Driftwood, an entrepreneur trying to matchmake two singers. The title of the film is *A Night At The Opera*.

Mercury and Taylor exchange a look. "That's a great title," one of them says. "We'll have it."

Act I: 'You suck my blood like a leech...'

At some point in late 1974 or early 1975, Queen bassist John Deacon turned to his bandmate Roger Taylor and broke the bad news.

"You know," Deacon told Taylor, "we've got fifteen hundred quid in the bank."

Fifteen hundred quid in the mid-70s wasn't a trivial amount of money, but it wasn't exactly big bucks either. Especially not for Queen, already three albums into their career.

"We were supposedly a successful band, an international band," says Taylor, silver-haired and elegant today, radiating the easy charisma of a man who settled into the job of being a rock star a long time ago. "We'd generated a lot of money, just not for ourselves."

"We were in a bad state financially," says Sir Brian May, still as recognisable as ever thanks to that now white thatch of hair. "We owed everybody money. We knew that if the next album didn't succeed, the ship would sink. But we were defiant."

That defiance fuelled Queen to make the most opulent, most joyous, most pivotal album of their career. One that, with the help of an outrageous and freakishly huge hit single, would save their career and give them a future.

"*A Night At The Opera* was a hugely important album," says May. "It opened up the world for us."

Creatively, Queen were on fire. They had carved out ➢

WATAL ASANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

a unique space for themselves with their first three albums: 1973's self-titled debut, 1974's *Queen II* and the same year's *Sheer Heart Attack*. They didn't sound like Led Zeppelin, Genesis or Bowie, but they had a little of the spirit of all three, along with a bit of Noël Coward, The Who and Aretha Franklin.

Behind the scenes, things were less happy. In 1972, the band had signed a deal with sibling entrepreneurs Norman and Barry Sheffield, owners of Trident Studios in London's Soho. Under the company name Trident, the Sheffields invested money in the band, funding everything from studio time to stage clothes. But Trident also managed the band, controlling their publishing and music rights. Money was being made, says Brian May, but Queen weren't seeing much of it.

"We owed everybody," the guitarist says. "We were in a lot of debt. Freddie, in particular, was very upset by the situation. He felt that it was stopping him moving forward and making this a career. He couldn't even afford a piano. It was hard. By that point we were serious about what we were doing. It wasn't 'Let's give this a try', it was our lives."

The future wasn't completely bleak. Even Queen's perilous finances couldn't dent their confidence.

"Freddie, Brian and myself had belief in the band," says Taylor. "I think John was slightly more sceptical. Well, he was quite tight [laughs]. I don't think he was as far-sighted as we were, but what can you say?"

In the bassist's defence, he had got married in January 1975, while the band were deep in the hole to Trident. But still, Queen were agitating for a move away from their managers. One of the people on their radar was Led Zeppelin manager Peter Grant.

"We loved Zeppelin and we loved Peter," says Taylor. "He was a fearsome man. Hell of a manager."

Grant had a proven track record, and the muscle and knowhow to extricate Queen from their Trident deal and solve their financial crisis. But there was one caveat: Queen would have to sign to Swan Song. And they weren't ready to play second fiddle to anyone, not even Led Zeppelin.

"Bad Company did that and they did very well out of it," says Taylor. "But it wasn't what we wanted. We were far too strong minded."

Salvation eventually came in the form of John Reid, a businesslike Scotsman who had been Elton John's manager and lover since the early 1970s.

"John had different kinds of plans, a longer-term view," says May. "That filled us with optimism."

Taylor is more blunt. "It meant we might actually make some money."

With Reid's assistance, Queen disentangled themselves from their deal with Trident and signed up with him.

"He promised us he would sort out all the business side," says May. "He said: 'Don't you guys worry, you go away and make the best album you've ever made.' And we were in that mood. But no matter how great a manager you've got, if the next album doesn't sell, you're in the mire."

Act II: 'Don't fool with fools who'll turn away...'

Queen's fourth album didn't arrive out of nowhere, although the musical path that brought them there was a zig-zagging one. Their debut had been an album for people in denim who liked heavy rock, albeit heavy rock with plenty of charisma, flamboyance and musical ambition – Mercury's outré *My Fairy King*, *Great King Rat* and *Liar* feel like the seedlings from which later more famous glories would sprout.

Queen II was different. It filleted out the most ambitious moments of its predecessor and spread them out across an entire album. Not for it the traditional Side A and Side B, but rather Side White and Side Black, matching its chess-piece centrepieces: May's *White Queen (As It Began)* and Mercury's

Brian May, Roger Taylor and Freddie Mercury recording vocals for *A Night At The Opera* at Scorpio Sound studios in London, September 11, 1975.

WATAL ASANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

The March Of The Black Queen. Their critics, and even some fans, were unconvinced by this air of cultivated grandeur.

"*Queen II* wasn't well received by everyone," says May. "At the time, a lot of people thought: 'Oh, what's this? This isn't rock'n'roll any more. What have they done?' And in a way we made *Sheer Heart Attack* to lay that ghost to rest: 'Let's make something simple and easy that people can get.'"

Sheer Heart Attack, released nine months later, was certainly less filigreed and more direct than its predecessor, but it was hardly the sound of a band dumbing down.

"I was very pleased with *Sheer Heart Attack*," says Roger Taylor. "I remember driving somewhere or other with Fred and thinking, 'We're going to have to do something even better, and it's not going to be easy.'"

Still, for May their next record had to hew closer to the sumptuous spirit of *Queen II* than *Sheer Heart Attack*'s rock'n'roll razzle dazzle. "I thought: 'We've made the sensible rock album, let's do what we really want to do now.' I don't know if you'd call it indulgent, but it was a determination to be ourselves in every possible way we could."

It helped that Queen had two strong and distinct songwriters in Mercury and May, and a third in Taylor, who was beginning to find his feet. Even at that stage, the singer was a formidable talent.

"He was quite fearsome," May acknowledges. "You never knew what he was going to come in with. Was I intimidated by him? Yes, I think so. In a good way: 'This is inspiring. I have to get my shit together.' We were competitive, all of us. You get spurred on by things like that.'"

The songs they came up with for the next album would match *Queen II* for opulence, and they also had the stylistic breadth of *Sheer Heart Attack*. They needed both. This album was make or break for Queen.

"We owed everybody money. We knew that if the next album didn't succeed, the ship would sink."

Brian May

Queen at Scorpio Sound (one of several studios they used for recording *A Night At The Opera*). L-r: John Deacon, producer Roy Thomas Baker, Freddie Mercury, Brian May, Roger Taylor.

Act III: 'I feel like dancing in the rain...'

Queen had prepped well. They spent most of July and some of August at Ridge Farm Studios in Sussex. There they rehearsed the songs they'd written so far and relaxed by playing pool and tennis (Mercury was reputedly a demon on the court). Mercury had rented a white Bechstein piano for the sessions, hence his credit for "Bechstein debauchery" on the album.

In mid-August they decamped to Rockfield Sudios, a converted farm in bucolic Monmouthshire, where much of *A Night At The Opera* was recorded, and recording began in earnest. The task of co-producing the album once again fell to Roy Thomas Baker, who had worked with the band on their first three albums, first as a glorified engineer on the debut and then as a fully fledged producer on *Queen II* and *Sheer Heart Attack*. Baker, who died in April 2025, was a larger-than-life character who could match any musician for ego and stubbornness. He needed it – producing Queen wasn't any easy job.

"We were very precocious boys," May concedes. "I imagine we must have been quite difficult to deal with. We were quite insistent. We knew what we were trying to do at that point. We were doing a lot of our own production in a way."

It wasn't just outsiders who butted heads with Queen. They often butted heads with each other, not least May and Taylor. Mercury may have increasingly relished the role of diva, but it was often he who poured oil on troubled waters.

"We needed someone who would be the diplomat. And, strangely enough, Freddie was that guy," says May. "One of Freddie's great catchphrases was: 'We don't compromise.' But within the band we did. And that's why we survived."

"Fred was fantastic," says Taylor. "He was so enthused about everything, and so creative. When ➢

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someone had an idea, he'd chase it down. He'd spend countless hours at the desk with the engineer, balancing the harmonies. He normally knew what he wanted. Mind you, we all thought we did."

Mercury certainly knew what he wanted from the song that would open the album. *Death On Two Legs* was a forceful rocker that opened with Mercury's piano and May's wailing guitar then exploded in a storm of wailing guitars and vituperative lyrics. '*You suck my blood like a leech, you break the law and you breach*,' snarled Freddie, going on to describe the object of his ire as '*a dog with disease... king of the sleaze*'.

Although the song appeared on the album's track-listing with the ambiguous addendum "Dedicated to...", the villain of the piece wasn't difficult to work out: the band's hated former managers Norman and Barry Sheffield.

"Fred was so angry, there was pure bile coming out," says Taylor. "Did we try to reign him in? Oh no. It was very vitriolic, but I think it was deserved. We were all for it. It was rather well put, I thought."

Norman Sheffield didn't agree. He sued the band and EMI for defamation. The case was settled out of court, although that didn't stop Mercury from describing his bête noire as "a real motherfucker of a gentleman" at live shows.

While *Death On Two Legs* was the singer at his most caustic, *Love Of My Life* showed him at his most delicate. A delicate ballad, it featured May playing harp.

"We went and rented one from some dusty old place," he says. "It was hugely out of tune. And then once you'd tuned up, whenever somebody opened the door and a draft came through, it would go out of tune again. I'm pretty certain I never played the harp again after that."

The song's subject has been debated over the years. Mary Austin, Mercury's then-girlfriend and lifelong confidante, seemed to be the obvious inspiration, but John Reid later revealed that the singer told him it was about David Minns, the EMI executive with whom Mercury had his first serious male relationship. Typically, Freddie denied it was about anybody in particular, saying he'd made the lyrics up.

By this point, Queen considered musical boundaries a distraction to be swatted away rather than an obstacle to be surmounted. Like *Sheer Heart Attack* before it, *A Night At The Opera* was a musical universe in itself. *Lazing On A Sunday Afternoon* and *Seaside Rendezvous* had Mercury channelling his inner Noël Coward, Deacon's *You're My Best Friend* was a sweet love letter to his wife, Veronica, that featured the bassist playing electric piano, the first time the instrument had appeared on a Queen track. May's similarly nostalgic *Good Company* found him recreating the sound of an entire trad jazz band on guitar. "Which took for ever," he says. "I don't think I'd do it like that today."

Less arduous to write and record was *'39*, a breezy skiffle-style shanty with a sing-song melody and yearning lyrics that put a sci-fi spin on the frontier tales of the Old West, with a group of astronauts exploring space to find a new home for humanity. But ever the astronomy student, May rooted it in hard science.

"I had this thought in my head that if you go close to the speed of light in a circle, Einstein's theory of general relativity tells you that your clock goes at a different speed," he says. "It could be that you come back after what you think is a year as an astronaut but it's a hundred years later back on Earth. You would come back to find your children or even grandchildren grown up. It's not the physics that got me, it's the emotional content. It still sends shivers up my spine."

Top: Freddie Mercury at the grand piano at Ridge Farm Studios, July 14, 1975.

Above: down time playing pool at Ridge Farm.

At the other end of the musical spectrum were the guitarist's *Sweet Lady* and Taylor's *I'm In Love With My Car*. The former was a roaring rocker with a throaty riff, written in unconventional waltz time. Like many of May's songs, *Sweet Lady* was about a conflicted love affair, although the brilliantly baffling line '*You call me sweet like I'm some kind of cheese*' undercut any seriousness. "It was quite spiky to play," May says. "I don't think Roger liked it." ("I don't *hate* it," Taylor protests.)

I'm In Love With My Car was no less revved-up. The song itself was inspired by petrolhead roadie Jonathan Harris, and the Alfa Romeo-driving drummer rasped his way through it like the louche boy racer they both were. The song featured an absolute zinger in the line: '*Told my girl I'd have to forget her, while I buy me a new carburettor*'.

"I was quite proud of that one," he says of that line. "Brian thought it was some kind of joke. But he was writing flimsy Victorian melodramas."

Act IV: 'Listen to the madman...'

Legend has it that the first time Freddie Mercury played an early version of *Bohemian Rhapsody* to Roy Thomas Baker, he stopped half way through and said: "And this is where the opera bit comes in." The producer later said he laughed at the outrageousness of it all.

Brian May and Roger Taylor had no such reaction.

"People have a hard time understanding how unsurprising

WATALASANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Bohemian Rhapsody was to us," May says. "'If you look at the first album, you've got *My Fairy King*, which is very complex and goes all over the place. And then you've got *March Of The Black Queen* on the second album, which is enormously complicated It's way more complicated than *Bohemian Rhapsody*. So it wasn't that much of a surprise to us. It was just: 'We'll do another one of these things.'"

"Another one of these things" turned into Queen's most famous song, and one that best embodied *A Night At The Opera*'s title. *Bohemian Rhapsody* can be broken up into three sections, bookended by an a capella intro and a brief outro. The first section set the scene: Mercury at the piano, confessing murder to his mother and aware that he must face the consequences. The third section, dramatic and heavy, has the singer furiously raging against his own impending death. The middle section is Mercury's "opera bit" - a cavalcade of tumbling '*Bismillah*'s and '*Gallileo*'s, written by man who admitted he knew nothing about opera. But what it lacked in formality and meaning it made up for in audacity. And it wasn't just Mercury who was all-in on it.

"As we were constructing the opera bit," Taylor recalls, "we were getting more and more wild: 'Stick a bit more on, stick another bit in, it'll all be fine when it gets to the heavy section.' And it was. We were planting our flag in the ground: 'This is really us – it's a bit mad but it's got everything in it.'"

In subsequent decades, the deeper meaning of *Bohemian Rhapsody* has been dissected, analysed, parsed and re-parsed. It's been interpreted as everything from Mercury's exploration of his Zoroastrian roots to a coded message about his sexuality. Mercury never explained what his songs were about, and May and Taylor can't shed much light on it today.

"Fred was so angry, there was pure bile coming out. Did we try to reign him in? Oh no."

Roger Taylor

"We never really asked each other about our lyrics," the guitarist offers. "It's an emotional song, one something everyone can relate to," says the drummer.

If there's a secret meaning behind the song, then Mercury took it with him to his grave. In the end, *Bohemian Rhapsody* might just be a song about a man with a gun and his mum.

For most bands, one towering epic per album would be enough, but *A Night At The Opera had two.* If *Bohemian Rhapsody* was Mercury's magnum opus, then *The Prophet's Song* was May's. At eight minutes, this portentous, quasi-biblical epic is two minutes longer than *Bohemian Rhapsody* and, with its cascading choral mid-section, just as ambitious. The finished track sounds like a mystical hard rock fever-dream – unsurprising given that's how the beginnings of the song came to May.

"Even now, I can kind see this strange man, this prophet, that I dreamed about," he says. "But I had a hell of a job translating it all into music. I remember Freddie banging out bits of *Bohemian Rhapsody* in the courtyard out in Rockfield while I was wrestling with what I was trying to do with the various versions of the verses and choruses in *The Prophet's Song*.

"You get this moment of doubt where you think: 'Maybe this is going to fall apart, maybe this isn't going to work at all.' A lot of people would have gone: 'What the hell are you up to?' But Freddie was so supportive, especially when it came to the [vocal] delays in the middle. And it all worked in the end."

The Prophet's Song opened Side Two of *A Night At The Opera*. On any other album it would have been the crowning glory, but here it was ultimately overshadowed by the record's other attention-grabbing number

"*The Prophet's Song* is built into certain people's ➢

Queen in the live room at Ridge Farm.

WATAL A SANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

© QUEEN PRODUCTIONS LTD.

lives, but it's not like *Bohemian Rhapsody*, which everybody knows," says May. "It didn't become a worldwide instant classic."

The intricacy involved in creating *Bohemian Rhapsody*, *The Prophet's Song* and even the breezy *Good Company* meant Queen were forced to work in multiple studios simultaneously to meet their deadline.

"The album was getting more and more complex," says May. "Freddie would be working on his vocal harmonies here, and I'd be working on my guitar orchestra over there for *Good Company*."

That necessary excess goes some way to explaining why *A Night At The Opera* was reputedly the most expensive album ever made to that point, costing somewhere between £30,000 and £40,000 – more than £320,000 today. Neither Taylor nor May can confirm that figure, but both agree that nobody was keeping an eye on the meter as it ticked upwards.

"Was it the most expensive album ever made?" Taylor says. "I'm not sure it was. But we didn't think about that sort of thing anyway. That stuff would all get ironed out."

"We were very precocious boys. I imagine we must have been quite difficult to deal with."

Brian May

"It was way too late to worry about money," says May. "We were already up to our necks in it. We were just going to grab this moment and make the best thing ever. We just knew it had to be right. That's all we cared about."

Budget buster or not, *A Night At The Opera* was finally finished in October 1975, and released at the end of the following month. Queen's sink-or-swim moment was here.

"I remember we had a little party for friends to play back the whole album," Taylor recalls. "We played side one, which ended with *Seaside Rendezvous* and 'Give us a kiss', which made everybody laugh. Then we put on side two, with *The Prophet's Song* and *Bohemian Rhapsody* and everything, and I think everybody was pretty stunned – in a good way. I remember thinking: 'This will be alright.'"

Act V: 'Don't have to listen to no run-of-the-mill talk jive...'

There was no doubt within Queen that *Bohemian Rhapsody* would be the first single from the new album. "We believed in the song," says Taylor. "We always thought it should be the single."

The problem wasn't Queen, it was everybody else. Manager John Reid was sceptical. Their label EMI thought *You're My Best Friend* would be more palatable to a public not ready for opera in the pop charts.

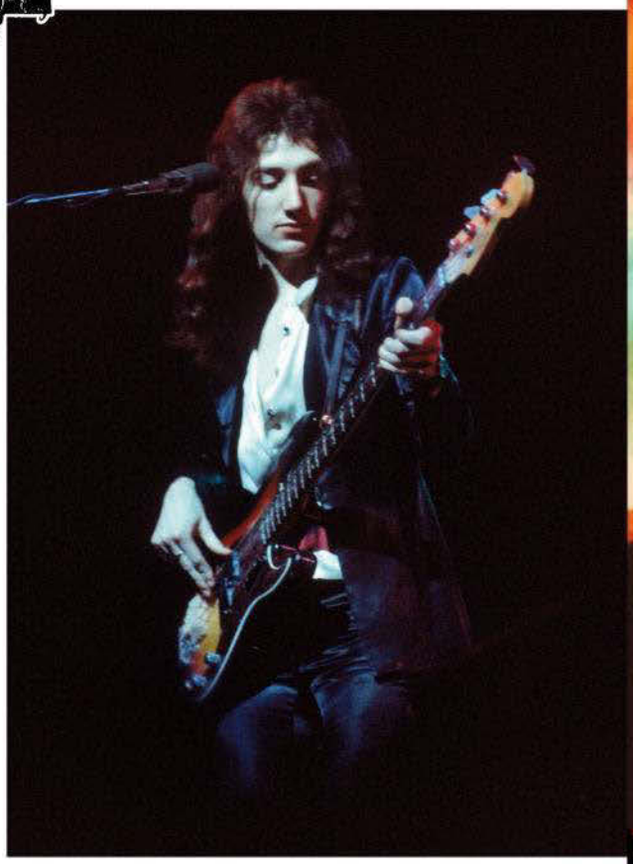
"Everyone told us: 'It's too long, it's too complex, nobody's ever going to play it,'" says May. "I think John [Deacon] wanted to cave in: 'Give them what they want, edit it down and give them the single.' But we went: "No, either we go with the whole thing or we don't.'"

"There were huge discussions," says Taylor. "I do remember John Reid sitting there and going: [grudgingly] 'Actually, I think you're right.'"

The band's cause was helped enormously by Kenny Everett, a DJ on London's Capital Radio whose anarchic, over-the-top personality was reflected in his shows. Everett and Mercury were friends, and the singer invited him to the studio to hear Queen's new music. When Everett left, he'd taken with him a work-in-progress tape of *Bohemian Rhapsody*. Whether he had pilfered the tape without the band's knowledge or taken it with their tacit blessing has been lost to time. Likewise the seriousness of Mercury's instruction that he couldn't play the song on air.

Either way, Everett spun snippets of the song directly from the reel-to-reel tape he'd taken. The switchboards lit up: what on earth was this, and can we please hear more of it? Over the next two days, Everett played the full song 14 times. His enthusiasm was matched by that of his listeners. Any doubt as to whether it should be a single was dispelled.

Bohemian Rhapsody was released on October 31, 1975, with Taylor's *I'm In Love With My Car* on the B-side. The latter would cause much friction in subsequent years, due to the writer of a single's B-side earning the same royalties as whoever wrote the A-side. One juicy rumour suggests that Taylor locked himself in a cupboard and refused to come out until ➢



Live killers: Queen captured on stage on the inner sleeve of *A Night At The Opera*.

"We were big spenders. We ploughed everything back into the shows."

Brian May

his bandmates agreed to include his song on the single. "Internet bullshit," he says emphatically today.

Bohemian Rhapsody entered the UK chart at a lowly No.47. It rose to No.17 the following week and No.9 the week after. There was a chance that it might reach No.1, which presented a problem.

Top Of The Pops was the UK's biggest music show, and its policy was that the No.1 single had to be played on the programme each week, either mimed in the studio or to a pre-recorded film. Given that Queen were about to go out on tour, this could be tricky. And how the hell could a band play – or even mime – an operatic section anyway?

The solution was to film a promo video for the song. It wasn't a radical idea – everyone from The Beatles to Queen themselves had done it before. But it would be a revolutionary one.

And so, on the afternoon on November 10, Queen and director Bruce Gowers met at Elstree Studios, where the band were rehearsing for their tour. Over the next four hours, Gowers filmed the band playing the song's piano-led opening section and heavied-up climax live.

But it was the a capella intro and operatic part of the song that had the most impact. Gowers took photographer Mick Rock's dramatic cover of *Queen II* – itself inspired by an image of Marlene Dietrich in the 1932 film *Shanghai Express* – as his jumping-off point.

Filming the band both in silhouette and lit starkly from beneath, Gowers turned Queen into an unearthly choir. The camera moved in time with the voices, shifting from side to side, kaleidoscoping the band, using video feedback to draw their faces across the screen.

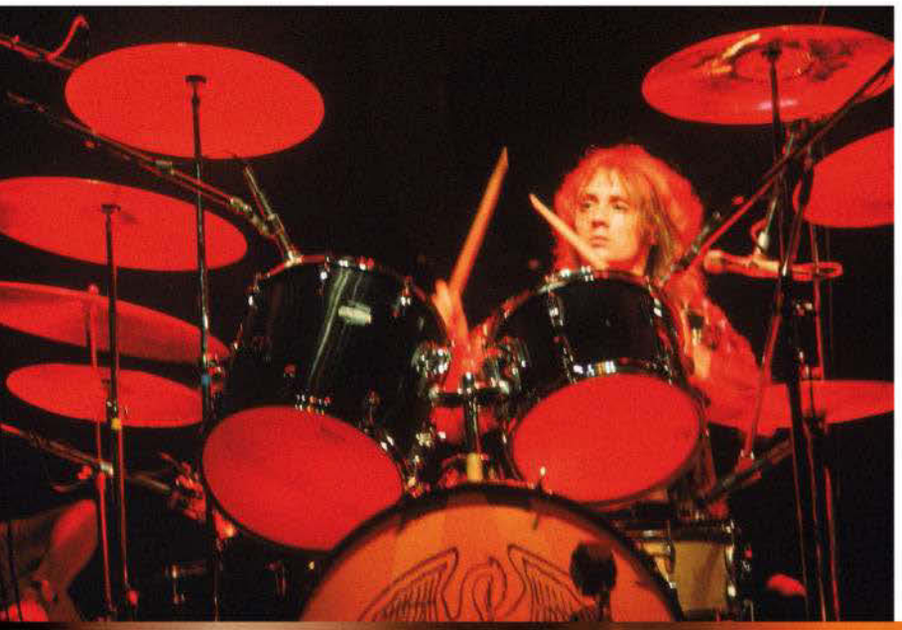
The whole thing took four hours and cost a reported £4,500. When it was finished, everyone went to the pub for last orders to celebrate.

"I remember watching the thing we did with Bruce Gowers for the first time in a hotel room," says May. "We just laughed. We thought: 'Are we going to get away with this?' Because to us, it was funny and cheeky."

They did get away with it – and then some. *Bohemian Rhapsody* premiered on *Top Of The Pops* on Thursday, November 20, when the single was at No.9. Queen had a night off and could feasibly have made it back to London for the live show, but why should they? That's why they made the video in the first place.

That *Top Of The Pops* transmission was the accelerant that set the fire raging, turning an already exotic song into something glamorous, otherworldly and new. When the latest singles chart was announced on the following Sunday, November 23, *Bohemian Rhapsody* was at No.1. It would stay there for a record-breaking nine weeks in total, including over Christmas.

"It was nice because it meant we didn't have to do it," says May. "And it was amusing for us, because I think they felt uncomfortable having to do that week after week."



A Night At The Opera was released on November 28, 1975, and reached No.1 in the UK three weeks later. Queen's regal gamble had paid off.

Act VI: 'Any way the wind blows...'

A sixty-inch gong stands in Roger Taylor's back garden. It's the same one the drummer took on Queen's *A Night At The Opera* tour 50 years ago, striking it with force every night at the end of *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

"Led Zeppelin had a gong but we had a bigger one," Taylor says proudly. "Sixty inches. It's a fucking big gong."

The tour in support of the album had begun at Liverpool Empire on November 15, 1975, two weeks before the album was released. They may still have been up to their eyeballs in debt at that point, but Queen weren't about to let something as trivial as money stand in their way.

"We'd always spent more than we could on touring," May says. "We were big spenders. We ploughed everything back into the shows. We wanted to give people everything we could. We wanted it to be the greatest thing they'd ever seen in their lives. Our motto was: 'We've got two hours to deafen and blind them and let them go away happy.'"

"Led Zeppelin had a gong, but we had a bigger one. Sixty inches. It's a fking big gong."**

Roger Taylor

During the early part of the tour, they would get reports on how *Bohemian Rhapsody* was performing. "You'd get the chart positions: 'Oh, we're Number One again...'" says Taylor. "It almost got boring after a while." Such was that song's all-encompassing success that follow-up single *You're My Best Friend* wasn't released until the following June. "Suddenly, everybody knew who we were because of *Bohemian Rhapsody*," says May. "It made us recognised in every country we visited."

In September 1976, the band took a break from recording *A Night At The Opera*'s follow-up, *A Day At The Races* (another Marx Brothers film title) to play four UK shows. The biggest of these was a free concert in London's Hyde Park on September 18, promoted by Virgin Records co-founder Richard Branson and attended by an estimated 350,000 people.

"It was odd," says May, "because we'd been around the world and we weren't sure whether people had forgotten us back home. We were quite shocked at the reaction. It seemed like there were a million people there. The only problem was that the police got very iffy because they thought there would be some kind of riot, and they wouldn't let us back on stage for an encore."

Unfortunate ending aside, the Hyde Park show felt like Queen's official coronation, and not just because it took place a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace. They'd made the album of their career and had a record-breaking hit single. And they finally had more than £1,500 in the bank.

"Suddenly we were in the black," says May. "The money's coming in. We're able to pay off all our old debtors – lighting companies, sound companies."

Epilogue

A Night At The Opera isn't Brian May's favourite Queen album. That would be a toss-up between *Queen II* and 1994's moving *Made In Heaven*. Nor is it Roger Taylor's – for the drummer, *Sheer Heart Attack* still edges it.

But, 50 years on, both recognise that *A Night At The Opera* remains Queen's most important album, the one that saved their career and secured their place at rock's top table.

"It was a watershed album for us," says May. "Thanks in a large part to *Bohemian Rhapsody*, people knew who we were. Not just in the UK, but in America, Australia, everywhere."

"We were at the peak of our confidence," Roger Taylor adds. "It felt like there wasn't anything we couldn't do, and it shows on that album."

A Night At The Opera is reissued on crystal clear vinyl on October 18. Bohemian Rhapsody is released on blue 7" and 12" single, 12" picture disc and cassette on October 31.

***A Night At The Opera* and *Bohemian Rhapsody* finally put Queen into the spotlight.**

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ROCKIN' ALL OVER THE WORLD

With **Scorpions**' 60th-anniversary celebrations in full swing, guitarist Rudolph Schenker and vocalist Klaus Meine look back at how the band went from being called 'the worst German import since the V2 bomb' in the UK to being their country's officially lauded rock icons.

Words: **James McNair**

Klaus Meine and Rudolph Schenker exude more pep than might reasonably be expected of two 77-year-olds. When *Classic Rock* talks to them they're still buzzing from their band's 60th-anniversary homecoming show in Hannover, Germany, and their general vibe chimes with the spirit of their 2022 single *Rock Believer*. As men still smitten and sustained by the genre after which this magazine is titled, Scorpions are big on the restorative power of riffage, and big on turning the spotlight on their fans. When vocalist Meine sings '*I'm a rock believer, just like you*', it rings true.

As Scorpions' lyricist (aided by their then drummer Herman Rarebell from 1977–96), Meine has better English than Schenker. However, Schenker's enthusiasm for the band he founded always translates.

"Sixty years on the road and still happy to be a rocker!" the guitarist says, beaming, chatting via Zoom. "Only us and the Stones can say that."

Shades on, cheekbones still prominent, Schenker is backstage prior to Scorpions' headline show at the Marés Vivas festival in Portugal this summer. Forever upbeat, he seems like the possible model for Viv 'Have a good time – all the time' Savage of Spïnal Tap.

"We have our own airport, our own postage stamp!"

Rudolph Schenker

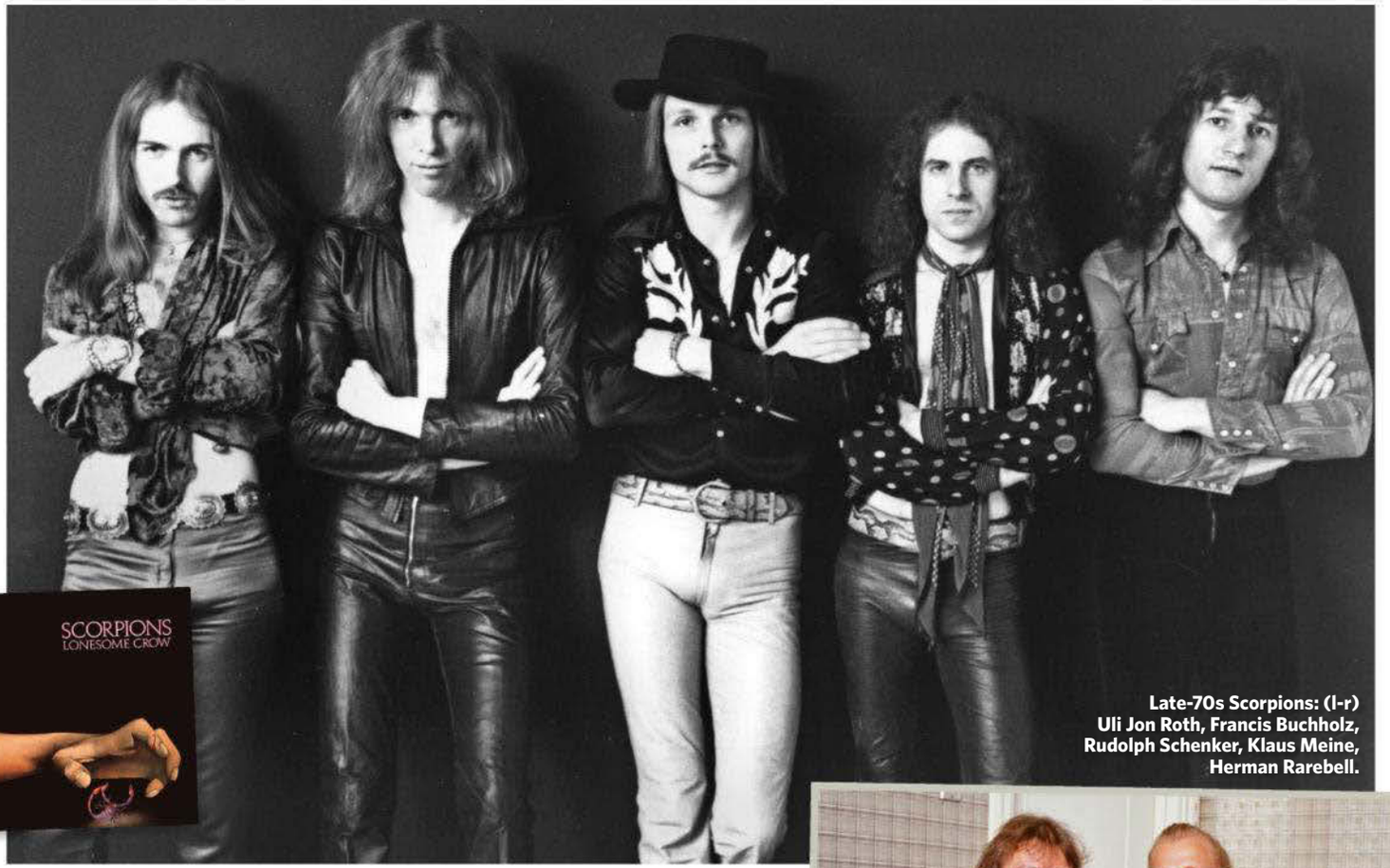
"Hannover was amazing, fans coming from Mexico, from Australia," he enthuses. "Normally I do a runner after the show, but I stayed up until two a.m. that night. I was shaking hands with our old manager Doc McGee and many other friends. Unbelievable!"

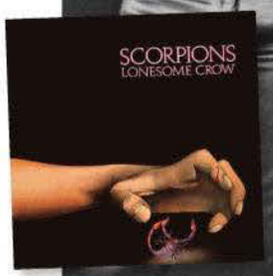
Meine, chatting from his home in Hannover two weeks later – prior to flying to Las Vegas for the band's five-night-stand at Planet Hollywood – is a warm, relaxed presence, wearing his trademark black beret. He too speaks fondly of Scorpions' homecoming show with old pals Judas Priest and Alice Cooper.

"The vibe was incredible," he enthuses. "It felt like a statement about our roots. You know: 'Thank you! This is where we come from.' It sold out really quickly and the promoters asked for a second show, but we wanted it to be special, a one-off."

With hindsight, only the July 4 timing of the Hannover show (due for release as *Coming Home* ➤

JULIEN WEBER/PARIS MATCH/CONTOUR BY GETTY IMAGES





Late-70s Scorpions: (l-r) Uli Jon Roth, Francis Buchholz, Rudolph Schenker, Klaus Meine, Herman Rarebell.

Oh brother: Rudolph (left) and Michael Schenker in 1984.

"It was quite a dream for some young boys from Hannover." Klaus Meine

Live in November) came to seem unfortunate. Scheduled prior to Ozzy choosing that day for his final stand at Villa Park, it precluded Scorpions' involvement – and that of Judas Priest – in that similarly momentous event.

"Not joining Ozzy was a shame, especially later when we heard the very sad news that he had died," says Meine. "But it was great to give something back to our home city," he adds, alluding to Hannover airport being renamed Hub Of The Scorpions in honour of the band, and to the Scorpions-themed exhibition, named *Rockstage*, that has been a permanent fixture in the airport's Terminal B since March.

"So many lovely things have happened this year, but we were a little worried people would get sick of us when they touched down in the 'Hub Of The Scorpions'," Meine says, laughing. "Maybe it's too much."

In these times of rapprochement à la Oasis's Gallagher brothers or The Black Crowes' Robinson brothers, some Scorpions fans had wondered if their 60th-anniversary celebrations might also see long-estranged siblings Rudolph and Michael Schenker on stage together again in Hannover. But it was not to be. Does Meine – the onlooker in between, who played with Michael in covers band Copernicus before they both joined Rudolph in Scorpions in 1969 – sometimes despair?

"Well, it's a family affair and it's their business," he says. "I think Rudolph was pretty much up for Michael joining us, actually, but the whole guest issue was very complicated by Ozzy's farewell show and other people's touring commitments. There is part of me that wishes whatever [bad blood] is between us all could be washed away and we could hang with Michael like we did in the old days. He's still a wonderful guitar player, truly amazing."

"I love Michael, but he's too different," Rudolph says, frankly. "He's a solo artist, and he has a hard time being part of a band. But like everyone who has played with the Scorpions, he will be thanked on the sleeve of *Coming Home Live*."

Rudolph reveals that there was also talk of Uli Jon Roth – who replaced 16-year-old Michael Schenker in Scorpions after the band's 1971 debut album *Lonesome Crow* and was with them for their next four albums– reuniting with the band in Hannover. "But the record company wanted a live album, we were also filming the show, and Uli wanted his own amplifier, all his own gear on stage," Schenker kind of explains. "We said: 'Sorry, Uli, we can't have people getting bored watching roadies.' I think it was good we concentrated on ourselves. That way we made no mistakes."

Along with the *Coming Home Live* album and new compilation *At First Sting* (more of which later), Scorpions' 60th-anniversary celebrations also herald yet another major event. *Wind Of Change*, the long-overdue biopic of the band (directed by Alex Ranarivelo and produced by Ali Ashfar), was made largely at Warner Bros Studios in Leavesden, Hertfordshire, with additional filming in Liverpool. As we speak, it's undergoing post-production tweaks in Los Angeles.

In Leavesden, sets recreating post WW2 Germany were built to portray the world into which Scorpions emerged in 1965 seeking change, acceptance from US and UK rock fans, and ultimately fame. All three would come their way eventually.

"Yes, I think it was in 1970 that I said that Scorpions would become one of the top rock bands in the world," says Schenker. "People thought I was mad."

MAIN: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; INSET: KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Members of Scorpions, Bon Jovi and others arriving in Moscow to play the Moscow Music Peace Festival in 1989.

Scorpions (Rudolph Schenker this photo, Klause Meine and Matthias Jabs left) rock the Music Peace Festival, August 1989.

Reaching out to the world circa 1980: Francis Buchholz, Herman Rarebell, Rudolph Schenker, Klaus Meine, Matthias Jabs

"It was quite a dream for some young boys from Hannover," says Meine. "It was not easy in the beginning to write English lyrics, but that was the only way to find our way into the international rock community. In the early days we experienced some racism, and the UK press were always talking about 'blitzkriegs' or calling us 'the worst German import since the V2 bomb'. But then the concerts got so good that people either forgot where we were from or didn't think it mattered."

All of this plays out in the film *Wind Of Change*, in which producer Ali Ashfar's involvement is deeply personal. Ashfar has said that Scorpions' message of love, peace and rock'n'roll was "an immense comfort" to him growing up as an Iranian immigrant to the US, and that the band's music "changed my life, if not saved it". He too was an outsider smitten with hard rock.

"We've met with Ali many times, and we feel he's the right guy," says Meine. "Of course, you look at other successful biopics, like *Bohemian Rhapsody* [Queen] and *Rocket Man* [Elton John], and wonder if you should join the competition, but with Ali it's a matter of trust."

In the film, German-born Alexander Dreymon plays Rudolph Schenker, and his countryman Ludwig Trepte plays Meine. Did the Scorpions pair offer the actors any tips in terms of how they should be portrayed?

"Yes, of course," says Schenker. "Alexander came to Hannover and we chatted for five hours. I told him he should read my [German-language only] book *Rock Your Life*, which gives advice about meditation and enjoying yourself."

"With Ludwig," says Meine, "I gave him a tip about the [specific] way I move the mic when I offer it to the audience to sing. We've mostly stayed out of it, though. Obviously we know the script already."

"I was never really interested in becoming famous too quickly, because then you lose the plot."

Rudolph Schenker

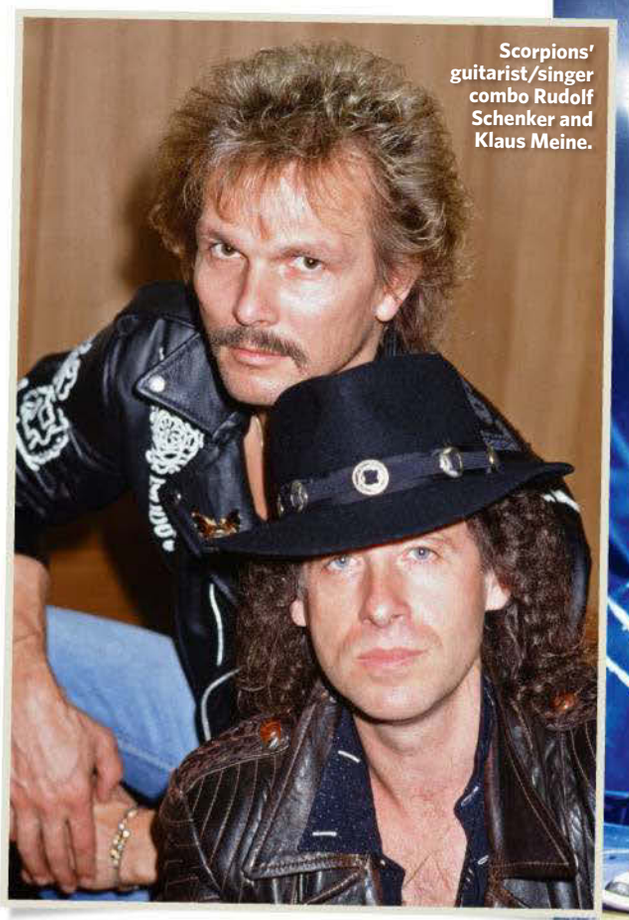
In the trailer for *Wind Of Change*, Trepte/Meine remarks pointedly: "We are not like our fathers. We are the new generation of Germans." Playing Schenker, Dreymon quips that Scorpions are "like The Beatles but more dangerous".

The film also explores Scorpions' late-80s role as a genuinely transformative force in the Cold War era and beyond.

"Lots of music movies only focus on the sex, drugs and rock'n'roll," notes Meine, "but this one has another side too. It would be crazy to try and look at sixty years of the Scorpions' career, so it follows us from the early days up until this very special moment in time."

Ah, yes. 1989. By that point Scorpions were already a decade with their current other guitarist Matthias Jabs. Beating 140 other auditionees, Jabs had replaced Uli Jon Roth as second lead guitarist in time to play on Scorpions' 1979 classic

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES x3; RICHARD E. AARON/REDFERNS x1



Scorpions' guitarist/singer combo Rudolf Schenker and Klaus Meine.

Rudolph Schenker makes the point that you're never too old to rock'n'roll.

Lovedrive album, and now the band were knee-deep in the glasnost era.

Together with other western rock acts including Mötley Crüe and Ozzy Osbourne, they played alongside Russian bands including Gorky Park at Central Lenin Stadium that August in an event billed as the Moscow Music Peace Festival. Promoting empathy between the Western and Eastern blocs, it was broadcast live to 59 nations, and later inspired Meine's whistling-led power ballad *Wind Of Change*. The song quickly became synonymous with the fall of the Berlin Wall that same year, and would go on to sell more than 14 million copies, making it the biggest-ever-selling single by a German artist. In 2025 it's difficult to imagine any single making such a resonant, politically charged splash.

"Obviously the world has changed since then, and I've had to change the lyrics over the years," says Meine. "The terrible war in Ukraine is just one of the reasons I don't feel as hopeful as I did when I had the idea for the song. But when I was sitting in the Gorky Park Center looking at the Moskva River, glasnost [then-Soviet Union president Mikhail Gorbachev's late-80s policy of transparency and open discussions in the Soviet government] seemed very real."

"When will we stop? When the music starts to sound terrible!" Rudolph Schenker

Rudolph Schenker always wanted to play anywhere and everywhere. His kid brother Michael began playing guitar professionally straight from school. But for Rudolph, the contrast between his mundane day job as an electrician and the heady thrill of driving to Marseille and back for one gig brought a missionary zeal.

"Of course I became a rock believer," he says, smiling. "We used to make our own leather trousers. Then I realised that you could be a quite big krautrock band like Amon Düül, or you could sing in English, play abroad and get really big. Once you are successful somewhere, the record company makes your record available there. That was the trick."

It was in 1982, Schenker recalls, when the North American leg of the band's *Blackout* tour took in such prestigious venues as Madison Square Garden, and their single *No One Like You* set US rock radio on fire, that he first suggested Russian dates to his bandmates. "I was like: 'There's nothing there. No record company. Let's go and show them that the new generation from Germany are bringing love, peace and rock'n'roll.'"

Later, when Schenker chatted with Eastern European concert promoter Laszlow Hegedus at the 1984 Monsters Of Rock Festival, Hegedus told Scorpions of "a new guy" named Mikhail Gorbachev.

"Laszlow said: 'I have good connections there, I'll take care of it,'" Schenker remembers. "And he did. We played five shows in Moscow and five shows in Leningrad, and became good friends with our Russian support band Gorky Park. On the first night, they turned up and said: 'Our manager has let us down. We're sorry, we have no amplifiers.' We said: 'Look – lots of amplifiers. Pick whatever you want.' We learned to make a bad situation into a good one."

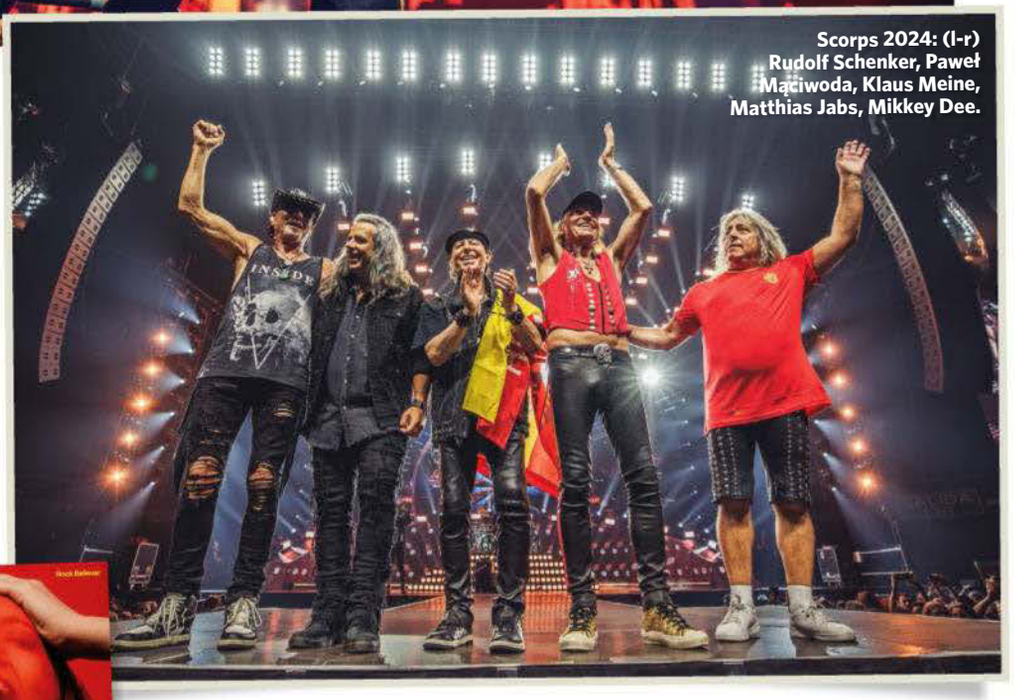
Klaus Meine's memories of the *Blackout* era are less happy. Despite that being arguably one of the band's best and most successful albums, the period was probably the nadir of his whole Scorpions career.

It was the band's long-term, all-important producer Dieter Dierks who first noticed Meine's voice was ailing badly as they began sessions for the album. It turned out that Meine needed nodes on his vocal cords removed using laser surgery.

"I remember my doctor saying: 'Klaus, your vocal cords are like a salami – you're losing a slice every other year,"the singer says today. "Sometimes I wish I was the bass player! By this point, singing involves a lot of preparation for me, a lot of warming up in advance. Live, it can be really frightening. The songs are not going to work if you can't sing them."

INSET KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

Klaus Meine with Scorpions in Madrid, July 2024.



Scorps 2024: (l-r) Rudolf Schenker, Paweł Mąciwoda, Klaus Meine, Matthias Jabs, Mikkey Dee.

Today, while many of their peers rest on their laurels, Scorpions are still forging ahead, broaching new milestones. As the opening track of 2022's *Rock Believer* says: '*There's gotta be more gas in the tank.*' Their new two-disc compilation *From The First Sting* includes a previously unreleased version of *Still Loving You*, recorded live on French TV show *Taratata* with violinist Vanessa Mae in 1996. "But what I remember most about that show is the host telling Alanis Morissette that the Scorpions created a baby boom in France in 1985," Schenker says, laughing.

New Scorpions music is also percolating.

"When you're a creative person, you can't switch that off, says Meine. "I gave Rudolph a couple of new lyrics not so long ago, but he hasn't come back to me with anything yet. But Rudolph and me still have an intact friendship after all these years and he's still the one driving us forward, though maybe not so much as in the past. Now he often says: 'If it's good for you and Matthias, I'll follow you there.'"

"These days my challenge to my bandmates is to have fun as long as you can," Schenker says. "But it's difficult. Ageing doesn't stop because you're a rocker. Touring is getting harder and harder. Klaus had operations on his knee, on his backbone, and when I'm home my kids want me to play soccer. But you can't take too long a break, because your body and fingers have to be in training. I did some stupid things in the old days, but now I make my yoga and meditation. The body can be very strong when you give him a chance to recover."

Does Schenker feel Scorpions' achievements have been fully recognised in Germany?

"Of course," he says. "We have our own airport, our own postage stamp! But I was never really interested in becoming famous too quickly, anyway, because then you lose the plot. I remember saying to Klaus: 'Be happy that we can live in peace here in Hannover without people knocking on the door asking for autographs.'"

With 60 years and a great many successes to look back on, various golden memories crop up as *Classic Rock*'s chat with Meine and Schenker winds down. Meine recalls a nervous wait for a one-on-one with one of his heroes, Paul McCartney ("It was backstage after a show of his in Hannover. Every time the door opened, my heart fluttered"), while Schenker speaks fondly of Journey guitarist Neil Schon turning up unannounced at a Scorpions US show after hearing *Lovedrive*'s magnificent opening track *Loving You Sunday Morning* on his car radio.

"It's been an incredible journey, and I think we're enjoying ourselves more than ever," Schenker concludes. "But we won't go on for ever, and the biggest challenge will be to stop at the right moment. When will that be? When the music starts to sound terrible!"

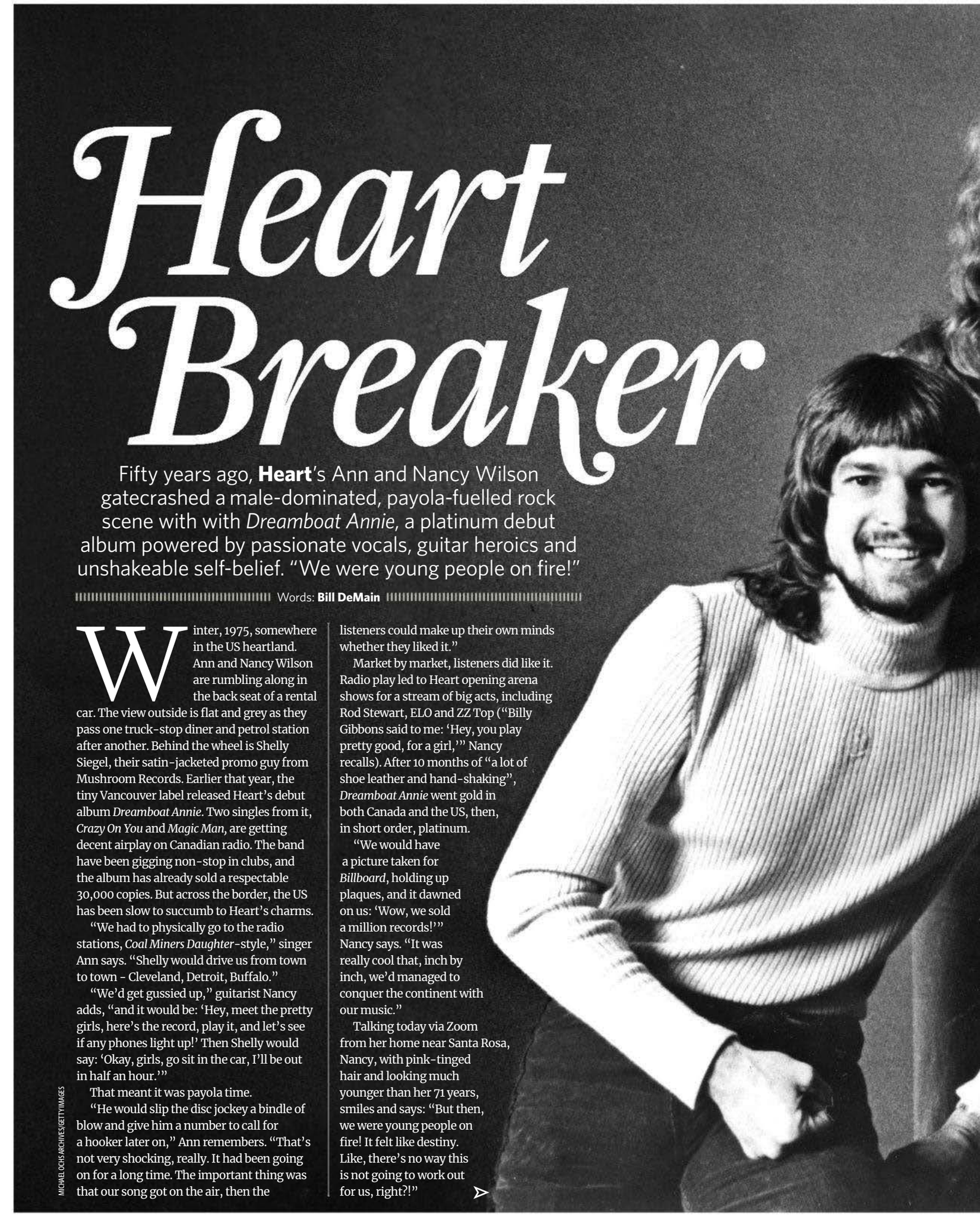
From The First Sting: The Best Of 60 Years is available now via BMG, Coming Home Live is released on November 14 via Spinefarm/Vertigo/Universal.

JAVIER BRAGADO/REDFERNS x3

Heart Breaker

Fifty years ago, **Heart**'s Ann and Nancy Wilson gatecrashed a male-dominated, payola-fuelled rock scene with with *Dreamboat Annie*, a platinum debut album powered by passionate vocals, guitar heroics and unshakeable self-belief. "We were young people on fire!"

Words: **Bill DeMain**



MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Winter, 1975, somewhere in the US heartland. Ann and Nancy Wilson are rumbling along in the back seat of a rental car. The view outside is flat and grey as they pass one truck-stop diner and petrol station after another. Behind the wheel is Shelly Siegel, their satin-jacketed promo guy from Mushroom Records. Earlier that year, the tiny Vancouver label released Heart's debut album *Dreamboat Annie*. Two singles from it, *Crazy On You* and *Magic Man*, are getting decent airplay on Canadian radio. The band have been gigging non-stop in clubs, and the album has already sold a respectable 30,000 copies. But across the border, the US has been slow to succumb to Heart's charms.

"We had to physically go to the radio stations, *Coal Miners Daughter*-style," singer Ann says. "Shelly would drive us from town to town - Cleveland, Detroit, Buffalo."

"We'd get gussied up," guitarist Nancy adds, "and it would be: 'Hey, meet the pretty girls, here's the record, play it, and let's see if any phones light up!' Then Shelly would say: 'Okay, girls, go sit in the car, I'll be out in half an hour.'"

That meant it was payola time.

"He would slip the disc jockey a bindle of blow and give him a number to call for a hooker later on," Ann remembers. "That's not very shocking, really. It had been going on for a long time. The important thing was that our song got on the air, then the listeners could make up their own minds whether they liked it."

Market by market, listeners did like it. Radio play led to Heart opening arena shows for a stream of big acts, including Rod Stewart, ELO and ZZ Top ("Billy Gibbons said to me: 'Hey, you play pretty good, for a girl,'" Nancy recalls). After 10 months of "a lot of shoe leather and hand-shaking", *Dreamboat Annie* went gold in both Canada and the US, then, in short order, platinum.

"We would have a picture taken for *Billboard*, holding up plaques, and it dawned on us: 'Wow, we sold a million records!'" Nancy says. "It was really cool that, inch by inch, we'd managed to conquer the continent with our music."

Talking today via Zoom from her home near Santa Rosa, Nancy, with pink-tinged hair and looking much younger than her 71 years, smiles and says: "But then, we were young people on fire! It felt like destiny. Like, there's no way this is not going to work out for us, right?!"

Ann Wilson with Heart at Oakland Coliseum, California, in 1977.

"He would slip the disc jockey a bindle of blow and give him a number to call for a hooker later on,"

Ann Wilson

Ann and Nancy Wilson were born in California and raised in Seattle, the second and third daughters of a retired Marine and his wife. Music was always playing in the house - "Ray Charles, Peggy Lee, classical," says Ann. But, as with so many young Americans, it was The Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1964 that changed the lives of Ann and her younger sister. "Unlike most girls, we didn't want to marry The Beatles, we wanted to *be them*," says Nancy. They got their first instruments shortly after.

"We produced little shows in our garage, sold tickets, singing and playing guitars," Nancy remembers. "We had bands together. Ann was the manager and I was the sidekick. Then eventually Ann went off to play in bands that I was too young to join."

Following her boyfriend Michael Fisher, who'd dodged the Vietnam draft and moved to Canada, Ann settled in Vancouver, then joined an all-male band called Hocus Pocus, soon to be renamed Heart. Their lead guitarist was Fisher's brother Roger, the bassist was Steve Fossen. In Spinal Tap tradition, several drummers came and went before Michael Derosier stayed put.

Meanwhile, Nancy was a freshman at Portland State college, "studying literature, writing poetry, playing folk clubs - stuff that would be helpful for me when I joined Ann's band". Sometimes on weekends she would drive up to Vancouver to sit in with them. "We'd play mostly covers - *Siberian Khatru*, *Highway Child* and lots of Zeppelin." Thanks to Ann's Plant-like vocal prowess, the band earned the nickname 'Little Led Zeppelin'. "I dipped my toes in the waters before I joined, a year and a half later," Nancy says.

Behind those "bread and butter days" was an ambitious "five-year plan" hatched by Ann's boyfriend.

"Michael was not afraid to think big about this little band," Nancy says. "He was the love of Ann's life. He *was* the Magic Man. He was our sound man, our manager, he designed our logo. But he was also a real slave driver. I became a better player thanks to Mike. He'd say: 'I want you to learn *The Clap* by Steve Howe.' A lot of work for a twenty-year-old to wrap my fingers around it. But I did. And that led to *Silver Wheels*, the acoustic introduction for *Crazy On You*."

"By the time we had a few originals, we were hustling around to make demos," Ann says. "We had our eyes fixed on the studio. The task was trying to get anyone at any record label to take us seriously." They sent their tapes around, in Canada and America. "And we got told no, at least twice, everywhere. Our last resort was Mushroom, this little label in Vancouver."

Nancy paints a picture of the band at the time: "We'd be playing at Oil Can Harry's in Vancouver by night, then during the day writing songs to take to the studio. We were twenty-four-seven working musicians, writing in vans, living on sardines and loaves of bread, gathering the ten thousand hours it takes to be a good band."

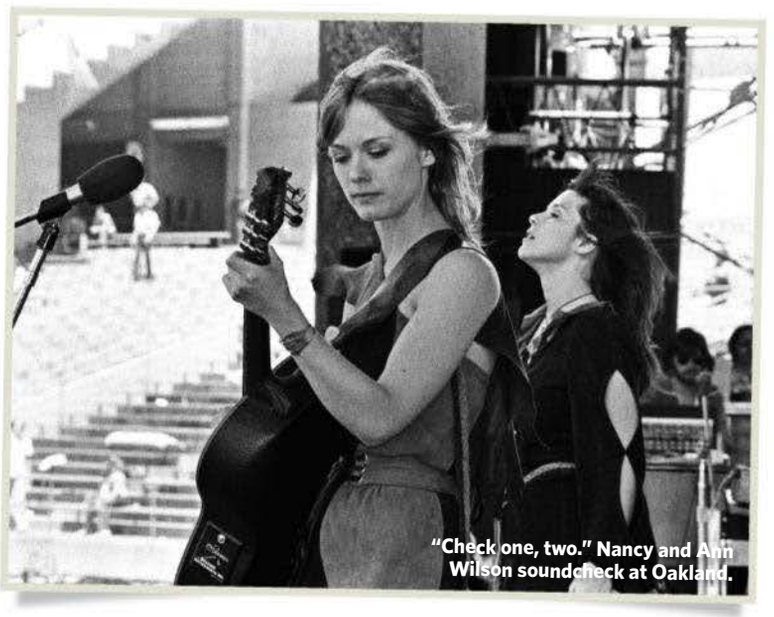
Mike Flicker, who was part of the Mushroom team and produced *Dreamboat Annie* (as well as all the albums in Heart's imperial phase), remembers: "Ann and Nancy both had the goods before they walked in the door. At the same time, they didn't have an ounce of ego. It wasn't that they were little lambs. They definitely had ideas, but they were open to try anything." Flicker likens his role to a film director: "I was there to capture their best performance, help them tell their stories. Our collaboration was the magic that formed the album."

Amazingly, two of the first songs that Heart recorded in Vancouver's 16-track Can-Base Studio became their signature hits: *Crazy On You* and *Magic Man*. "Back then I would write down a poem or a piece of prose, then Nancy would set it to music," Ann says of their process. "*Crazy On You* is about sexual awakening, but it's really about taking a step back to look at the world. The culture was just standing on its ear and everything was overwhelmingly in trouble - Vietnam, the gas crisis. I was singing to my boyfriend, 'Oh my god, what's wrong with the world?'"

The band added *Crazy On You* and *Magic Man* (audiences loved its two-minute lead guitar freak-out) to their live sets.

"We'd built up a strong base in the Vancouver area,' Ann says, "so they let us have a lot of freedom. As long as we did their beloved Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple covers, we could slip in a few originals. I think I finished writing some of the words to the songs on *Dreamboat Annie* in the clubs, because it's always good to write out there in the middle of the action."

"Ann was formulating her persona in the course of



"Check one, two." Nancy and Ann Wilson soundcheck at Oakland.

RICHARD MCAFFREY/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVE/GETTY X2

Ann and Nancy Wilson, September 1976.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

"Ann and Nancy both had the goods before they walked in the door. But they didn't have an ounce of ego."

Mike Flicker

Band on the run: Heart (l-r) Steve Fossen, Howard Leese, Nancy Wilson, Ann Wilson, Roger Fisher, Michael Derosier.

recording the album," Nancy says. "You could hear bits of Elton John, a little Robert Plant, and this shy ballad singer too."

Although Flicker still marvels at how Ann would nail her vocals in two takes, he also recalls giving her some valuable advice. "I said: 'The song is going to tell you where, what, how to feel, what to do, and you'll need to find that character that you're going to play within the song - that's where it should all be coming from."

Although the singles cast Heart as a hard rock band, *Dreamboat Annie* is more nuanced and complex than that. Ballads *How Deep It Goes* and *(Love Me Like Music) I'll Be Your Song* shimmer with an orchestral and melodic sophistication reminiscent of The Carpenters, while the sweeping, six-minute *Soul Of The Sea* has prog-like mood changes. Then there's the title song, which appears in three distinct versions across the album – folk, country and breezy California pop.

"We were children of The Beatles and Elton John," Flicker explains. "*Sgt. Pepper* and *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* were the albums that influenced us. That's why you couldn't easily say Heart is a rock group or a pop group."

"We wanted to be artsy and have a concept album," Nancy explains. "In the mid-seventies, that was happening. Songs with lots of departures and recurring motifs. So on *Dreamboat Annie* we were ready to take on the world and be impressive and brave. Honestly, we didn't know if we'd ever have a chance to make another record, so we thought: 'Let's blow the whole gamut!'"

As *Dreamboat Annie* became a bona fide hit in the US, Heart realised that they might be outgrowing their label. Mushroom was small, and had cash-flow issues. "Their slowness in paying us became increasingly frustrating," Ann remembers. At the same time, major labels who'd previously turned the band down came a-courting. "We put them off out of our loyalty to Mushroom," she says, "and ended up touring to make money." They played more than 200 dates in the next year.

But their label loyalty was shaken during that tour. Mushroom took out a full-page ad in *Rolling Stone*, trumpeting the band's success. Made to look like the front page of a sleazy tabloid, the headline read: 'Exclusive – The Heartbreaking Story! Regional Hit Mushrooms Into Million Seller'. That was all fine and good. But further down the page, under a photo of Ann and Nancy, back to back, bare-shouldered, it said: 'Heart's Wilson Sisters Confess: "It Was Only Our First Time!"'

"The insinuation was really sexual, that we were lesbians," says Nancy. "And of course we were not. So we were really offended."

Who was responsible?

"One of the publicity people around the record company probably came up with it," she sighs. When the sisters complained to promo man Siegel, who by then had developed a serious cocaine problem, and was taking credit for the band's success, he brushed it off: "Don't worry about it. Ink is ink!"

> **"We didn't know if we'd ever make another record. So we thought: 'Let's blow the whole gamut!'"**
>
> **Nancy Wilson**

The fallout from the ad (Heart sued Mushroom for their unauthorised release of the unfinished second album, *Magazine*, then signed with Portrait/Epic) did result in one of their biggest hits.

Nancy: "At a party for *Dreamboat Annie*, this guy comes up to Ann and says: 'How's your lover, Annie?' She goes: 'Well Mike Fisher's right over there. He's fine.' And he goes: 'No, I mean your sister!' Ann turned on her boot heel and huffed out of the room, then wrote the words for *Barracuda* up in her hotel room."

Barracuda would be just one in a long line of hits ahead in Heart's volatile 50-year career. They've survived lawsuits, drug problems, health scares, multiple personnel shake-ups (more than 40 members), changing trends, and even a falling out between the sisters that briefly resulted in separate versions of Heart ("Things like that will happen, but then they'll get better, and we'll love each other more," Ann says). In 2025 they're reunited and on tour, with a setlist that favours their wide-eyed beginnings, plus a little helping of Led Zeppelin covers.

"*Dreamboat Annie* was made before you could auto-tune or process, so you were really out there singing and performing," says Ann. "It was a lot of work, but it's great training to record that way, because then you can go out and reproduce what you've done in the studio."

"The whole imprint that I have of the album now is innocence," says Nancy. "The sound, the production, the way Ann sings. It sounds very pure and sweet. It's beautiful, like a flower child of an album. We were young. As we used to joke: 'Young and *unburnt*!'"

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

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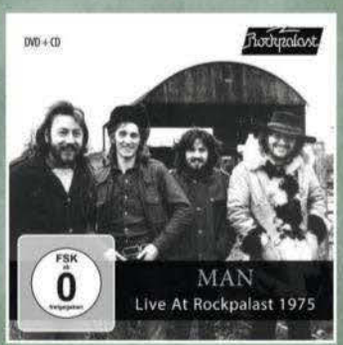
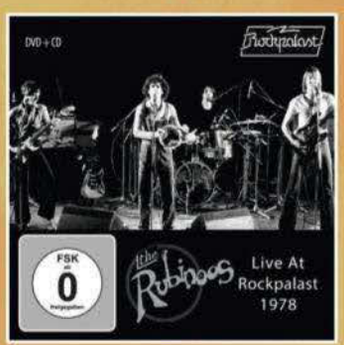


"The full 1975 Rockpalast performance – with brand new liner notes from MAN's own Martin Ace."

The Rubinoos
Live At Rockpalast 1978



"Beserkley Records Live Part 1: Pure power pop from The Rubinoos at the legendary Rockpalast TV show."

Earth Quake
Live At Rockpalast 1978

"Beserkley Records Live Part 2: Earth Quake storm Rockpalast with their classics 'Friday On My Mind' and 'Trainride'."

HOUSE OF

Creeper's new album is a rich, lascivious feast of vampires and rock'n'roll theatre, Jim Steinman-style. But the real Creeper story starts with shoestring punk gigs, DIY video shoots, community spirit, hard work and... er, sales work.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Years ago, Will Gould stood on the side of a motorway dressed as a giant pizza box and honking a clown horn. With no plans beyond putting on shows and surviving in whatever bands they were in at the time, the singer and his Southampton rocker circle took shifts in call centres, bars and food joints. They shared houses, slept on floors and mucked in with each other's artistic efforts. By night they played gigs all over town. Bands including Phoenix Down, Little Girl Lost, Tight Like Strings and Our Time Down Here came and went.

From these foundations Creeper would be born, and then reborn multiple times, moving through punk, emo and glam incarnations before arriving at their current cocktail of rock and metal theatre; vampire rock'n'roll with *Rocky Horror* in its veins, epitomised by *Sanguivore II: Mistress Of Death*.

For now, though, Gould was advertising Dominos' new stuffed-crust to irate motorists, wondering if he'd be doing shit like this for ever.

"It was a pretty low point," he says, smiling with the good cheer of a lifelong DIY spirit. "I needed the money, though."

Helpfully, sales work like this was at least flexible. For three years Gould and his guitarist friend Ian Miles juggled club nights and shoestring tours with accosting people on high streets across the south coast. It drew them out of their introspective shells. "Really that was a very big turning point in terms of confidence and learning how to be public-facing," says Miles. "So it *has* really helped with what we do now."

Today the pair are speaking from Gould's new flat in Manchester. He used to live in an 18th-century church until the plumbing got too much, but the new place is still satisfyingly spooktastic. Two giant cuddly skeletons are draped over the sofa. A bookcase full of pumpkins stands in one corner. There are horror film posters and books about Disneyland. A pair of cats prowl in and out of shot. It's like a child's Halloween dream house.

"We like to describe Creeper as a family business," Gould enthuses. "We already have more people than most bands, we're like The Polyphonic Spree sometimes. It's like trying to shoot a ska band every time we take a picture, it's a nightmare. But on top of that there are long-suffering people who have come on board and worked with us for a long time now."

All wide-eyed energy and finely arched brows – part Richard O'Brien night-dweller, part children's entertainer – Gould makes a charismatic ringleader for this family unit. It's easy to picture him at the Meat Loaf tribute nights he frequents. Next to him, Miles is quieter but engaging, the ghosts of dark times with his mental health hanging faintly in the background. They're a very likeable pair: film nerds and Jim Steinman fanboys, at the head of this Ed Wood-style gang with its recurring cast and B movie-esque knack for homespun worlds.

Over time their circle has grown. Gould's girlfriend Charlotte (daughter of Dare bassist Nigel Clutterbuck) does their make-up. Charlotte's

HORRORS

Cure-loving sister Beth is 'Darcia the vampire familiar', Creeper's social media mascot. Patricia Morrison (Sisters Of Mercy, The Gun Club) appears on *Sanguivore II*. Everyone, including the six band members, wears multiple hats as required. Miles, who studied film techniques at university, does sound effects for their videos.

It's not difficult to trace it all back to their punk roots – the same all-hands-on-deck mentality that informs everything they do.

"We created this miniature, like an old gothic Victorian house," Gould recalls of one video shoot. "Charlotte was vaping to try and make smoke from the side of it. It was making her feel sick because she was doing it so much. It's always very DIY, all mucking in trying to make something. We've lost numerous house deposits on this band."

"We like to describe Creeper as a family business. We already have more people than most bands."

Will Gould

For years Creeper dreamed of making their "Meat Loaf album", and how they might pull it off. Following a stretch on Warner Music (for their first two albums) and some testing times, they learned an important industry lesson: no one will care as much about your band as you do.

"One of my biggest frustrations with music is when, as we've got a little bigger, someone will go: 'You don't have to do that any more,' and then they do a really bad job," Gould recalls. "So we've been like: 'Let's never have someone involved in this who doesn't love it.' Because it's a labour of love. No one's getting a huge payday at the end, so we do it out of love for the art part of it."

That love emanates from their new album and all its blood-spattered bells and whistles. Tracking the journey of a vampire rock band raging across 1980s America, *Sanguivore II: Mistress Of Death* follows in the theatrical, spandexed footsteps of 2023's *Sanguivore*. Bodybuilding star Sarah Page plays the Mistress Of Death character, in hot pursuit of the bloodsucking band across the album's track-list. Gould met her at a wrestling convention. For Creeper's Bloodstock set this year, Page appeared in black leathers and an executioner's mask.

"I knew we wanted her to be muscly, not some skinny girl in a cat suit," Gould reasons. "We wanted her to look like something powerful, beautiful in a different way. She's genuinely terrifying, but she's the sweetest person ever behind that mask."

Sonically, the ambitious, *Bat Out Of Hell*-shaped fingerprints of Jim Steinman are all over both records. In producer Tom Dalgety (Ghost, Rammstein, Royal Blood), they found a kindred spirit: someone who loved Steinman and Meat Loaf as unironically as they did. As soon as they'd finished *Sanguivore*, they knew there had to be a second part.

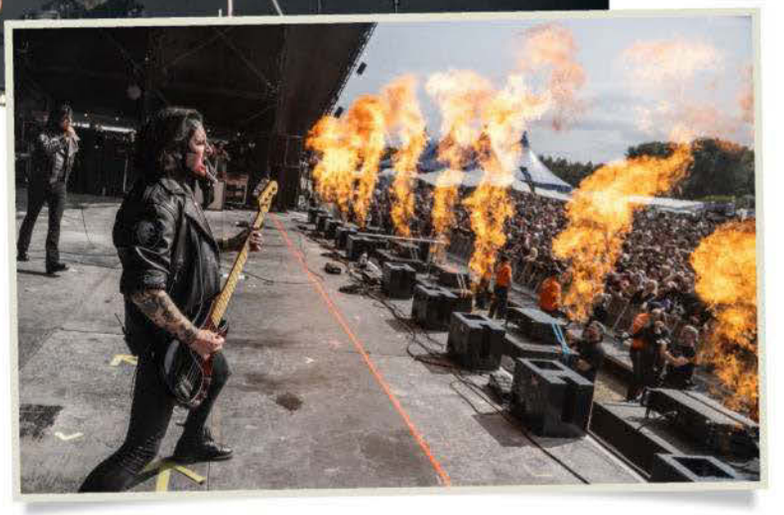
"We had this connection with Tom," Gould explains, "who'd been the third man at the wheel. It was so fun writing with him. And we felt like: 'Oh god, we could do a lot more of this.'"

"We've been referencing Jim Steinman for so long," Miles adds, "since the beginning of the band. But this was the first time we got to dig in with a producer that had a really vast knowledge of him and his work. That's why it's the first time we've had a continuation of a record, and we haven't just cut everything clean off and started afresh with a new aesthetic and sound. We weren't ready to not write more like that."

Sanguivore II finds them taking it all further.

HARRY STEEL/PRESS

Creeper: smell the greasepaint, feel the heat, feel part of their community.



There are new-wave strains of Billy Idol. *Floodland*-era Sisters Of Mercy flavours. The cackling humour of Alice Cooper. Colour and shade that makes for a more nuanced listen than initial, bombastic impressions might suggest.

"What we try and do is get those big songs out there to hook people in," Gould says. "That was one of the great things about *Bat Out Of Hell* for me; if you heard the title track, you could assume that the record was all one thing. But then when you came in, you found all these elements of Motown and other things."

Indeed, for all its lightness and knowing winks, *Sanguivore II* is no skin-deep romp. For every straight-up banger (e.g. the groovy thrash of *Headstones*, the singalong pomp of *Blood Magick (It's A Ritual)*) there's the stirring new wave of *Daydreaming In The Dark*, or the Alannah Myles *Black Velvet*-style sensuality of *Razor Wire*; hidden depths that hit hard. The sounds of people who love this music, and who've pulled each other back from various brinks: grief, alcoholism, personal demons, breakdowns. Much of this peaked in Los Angeles where they made their second album, 2020's *Sex Death And The Infinite Void*, Gould spiralling down in Hollywood while Miles (who'd been sectioned following a psychotic episode) wrote from a hospital bed.

"One of the things I love about our show now is that we come out on stage in this vampire make-up that slowly melts off during the show, revealing the human beings underneath," Gould says. "We come on with a costume and you find something sincere under it all."

For Gould, a "very confused" adolescent in 90s/00s Portsmouth, it all started with his parents' record collection – which he inherited after their divorce. Roxy Music, T.Rex and Slade filtered into this musical diet. Around that time a friend of his dad lent him David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust: The Motion Picture*, which ignited a love for rock'n'roll myths and drama. In 2018 Gould would 'kill off' Creeper in similar style at a London gig.

But it was *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* that sparked his most profound personal awakening. Initially he stumbled upon a VHS copy at his dad and stepmother's house, thinking it was a horror film, until its themes of androgyny, kinks and sexual freedom proved otherwise.

"I know it's fucking weird to talk about, but it was a really big part of sexuality for me, coming to be comfortable with myself. I'll always credit it as being a really, really big part of that. I think it is for a lot of people.

"My mum took me to the live show when I was about fourteen," he continues, "and we went to the bar and saw a load of really built, builder-ish dudes, tough-looking lads, in fishnets and stuff. I was like: 'This is amazing! I love this. This is where I fit in.'"

Meanwhile in Romsey, Miles came upon *...And Justice For All* in his dad's record cupboard. His father (an old-school metaller who loved Venom and Black Sabbath) didn't much like Metallica, but Miles was hooked. It carried him through formative days on the Southampton hardcore scene, and into Creeper. You can hear it in the pace and gritty panache of the guitars on *Sanguivore Part II*.

"I was still a young kid, and it blew my head off. I was like: 'Why is it so fast? Why are the guitars so loud?' I loved it. I was sucked into guitar world. I remember reading the liner notes, smelling the sleeve and thinking: [he laughs sheepishly] 'That's what it must have smelled like in the studio when they were recording the record!'"

"But that's how you feel as a young music fan, isn't it?" Gould says. "It's like you've suddenly discovered magic, or some sort of dark art."

Translating that excitement into on-stage confidence has been a work in progress. Years of touring, setbacks and breakthroughs. Pressure to be the next My Chemical Romance (during their earlier, more emo-heavy years). Two years ago Gould was throwing up before shows as a result of panic attacks. Wearing full vampire make-up has been a turning point.

"I found it a lot easier to process the idea of going on stage and performing in front of people with the make-up on," Miles says. "It's really interesting how much of a profound effect putting a bit of paint on your face has."

Fans responded accordingly, attending gigs in extravagant vampiric garb, their faces painted immaculately. It's fostered a deep, friendly sense of community. Multiple generations convene at Creeper gigs. Extroverts in the moshpit and quiet souls sitting at the back, all of them finding something here. Much like those *Rocky Horror* shows, where Gould began to recognise his bisexuality.

"There's some silly sexual overtones to it, but in the same way you see at *Rocky Horror*, no one's going to mess with you at a Creeper show," he says. "It's a very accepting place, and I'm very proud of that."

They buzz naturally between projects. During covid, Gould formed a punk band, Salem, while Miles released a darkly atmospheric solo album, *Degradation, Death, Decay*. It seems to have fuelled their multi-tasking, communal approach to all things Creeper. The haunted houses they create in their kitchens. The scripts they write. The gruesome sound effects they conjure. In another life they might have made pulpy horror films. Instead, they started a band.

"It's allowed us to learn so many different skill sets," Gould says. "I had to record myself squelching an orange to make an eye-gouging thing we did the other day. It's all the stuff that we dreamed about when we were younger, making films, music, being collaborative with our friends. It does feel like a community project a lot of the time, and it couldn't work another way for us."

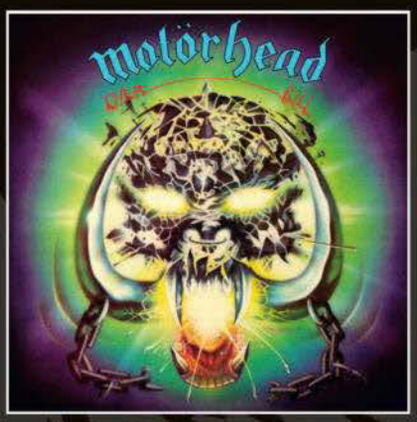
"It's really interesting how much of a profound effect putting a bit of paint on your face has."

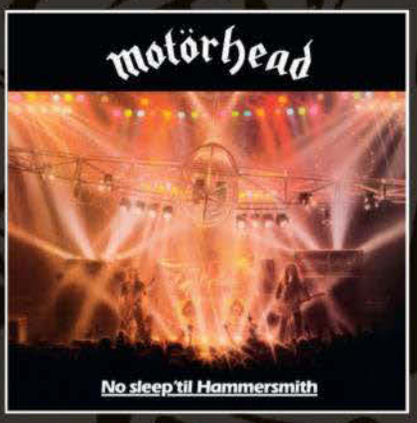
Ian Miles

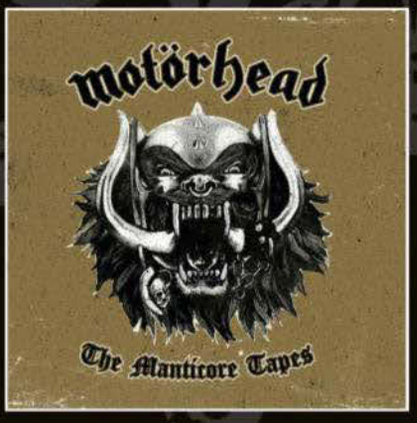
Sanguivore II: Mistress Of Death is out on October 31 via Spinefarm. Creeper tour the UK in support of Ice Nine Kills from December 8 to 12.

KATIA OGRIN

motörhead







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Give Me Shelter

At a time when many aspects of **Tom Petty**'s world were falling apart, he took refuge in the studio. The deeply personal *Wildflowers* album was the result, and despite all the chaos and confusion that fed into it, it's the one he regarded as his best.

Words: **Jaan Uhelszki**

Tom Petty thought he was just making another solo album. Instead he ended up performing open-heart surgery on himself, without anaesthesia, and recording the whole procedure. *Wildflowers*, the 1994 album he believed was his best work, has since become the Rosetta Stone of his career: part confession, part escape hatch, part love letter to the wreckage of his life. He cracked himself open, not to shock, but because he couldn't hold it in any more.

Between the summer of '92 and spring '94, while Petty recorded *Wildflowers* his 22-year marriage to Jane Benyo was in collapse; he fired Stan Lynch, the only drummer the Heartbreakers had ever known; and he severed ties with MCA, the record company that had shepherded him through a dozen years of hits (and mutual lawsuits). He even shifted course from using Jeff Lynne, the producer who had brought him Grammys, Wilburys and a second act. "He was blowing up every aspect of his life," says Mary Wharton, director of the documentary *Somewhere You Feel Free: The Making Of Wildflowers*. "From his personal life to his business life to his creative life, Tom was trying to figure out how to put things back together in a way that made sense to him in that moment."

During the early stages of the pandemic, three years after Petty's death, Wharton was contacted by her fellow VH1 alum Adria Petty, to fashion a film from unearthed 16mm reels of studio footage shot during the recording of *Wildflowers*. Petty's daughter had found the never-before-seen footage in her father's archives. It captured some of the most vulnerable moments of the artist piecing together the most personal record of his career.

"Being on stage is pretty comfortable. Life is much more complicated than a rock'n'roll set."

Tom Petty

While delighted to be reunited with Adria, the award-winning filmmaker found something unexpected in the footage: not a flinty superstar, sanguine and cool while plotting hits, but a man stripping himself raw. "This is Tom at his most honest, most vulnerable," she explains. "He wasn't trying to make a hit, he was trying to make sense of his life. You see the joy in the work. He looks lighter in those moments. Like the music was carrying him someplace else."

That "someplace else" announced itself on a warm spring day in 1992 as Tom Petty drove home from the upscale resort town of Santa Barbara. The road glittered like a mirage, sunlight slicing across windshield like an acid flashlight, the coastal hills were covered in a seamless patchwork of golden California poppies and purple lupine. Something about that distracting riot of colors, light and the somnolent hum of traffic lodged in Tom Petty's psyche as he drove back to his Encino home – only to emerge months later when he turned on his eight-track tape recorder.

Wildflowers was not the first song written for the album. It appeared full-blown in 1993, a year after he began writing songs for what would become his second solo album. Petty was always amazed by the miraculous nature of the process, likening it to when Bob Dylan wrote *Like A Rolling Stone*, which Dylan claimed began as "a long piece of vomit". Explaining to Paul Zollo for his 2005 book *Conversations With Tom Petty*, he said: "I swear to God, it's an absolute ad-lib from the word go. I turned on my tape recorder deck, picked up my acoustic guitar, took a breath, and played that from start to finish."

While the California landscape outside looked ➢

MARK SELIGER/PRESS

With chaos blowing through his personal life, in the studio Petty found shelter from the storm.

pastoral, the one inside Petty's head was closer to a demolition zone. His marriage to Benyo, whom he'd known since high school and was the mother of his two daughters, was disintegrating. The Heartbreakers were in flux: Lynch sulking since Petty's first solo album, *Full Moon Fever*, Benmont Tench and Howie Epstein grumbling that playing Petty's solo songs made them feel like a covers band. Petty had already decided Lynch wouldn't play on the new record. His longtime label, MCA, was another relationship headed for divorce; he'd already stashed a Warner Bros contract in a vault, waiting to satisfy MCA with a 'greatest hits' package. It was midlife crisis as controlled burn, with family, band and business all ablaze at once.

And yet, instead of resorting to rock'n'roll flamethrowers, Petty turned his gaze inward. Always a master of brevity, sly humor and a winking kind of Southern bravado, he came across as uncharacteristically wistful, introspective, and far more personally forthcoming than at almost any other time in song. Unpretentious, straightforward and emotionally naked, he betrayed no hints of his usual blithe stoicism and insider's nonchalance. Why? Because never before had he been at this particular crossroad, one that demanded action.

The sparse, unadorned title track begins with deceptively lighthearted acoustic guitar, spinning an escapist dream from the ruins of his marriage, a plea not to repeat the abusive cycles of his childhood. '*You belong somewhere you feel free*,' he sings. His therapist confirmed the self-diagnosis, according to his daughter. "That song is about you. That's you singing about what you needed to hear."

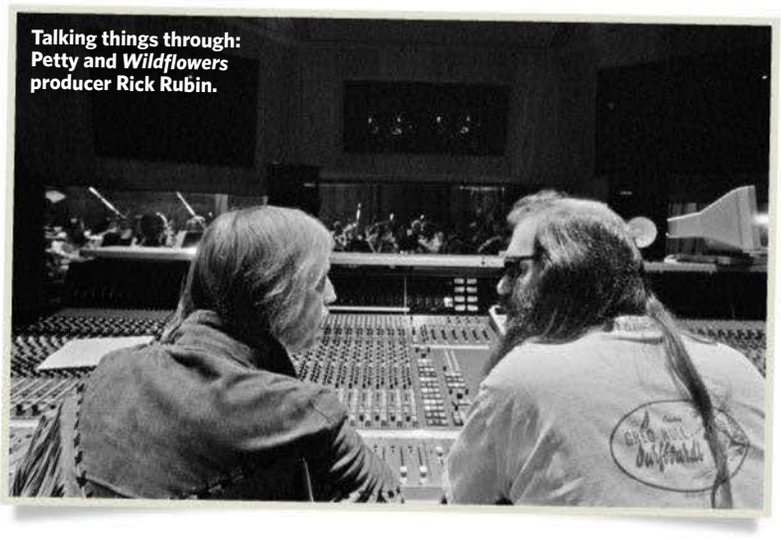
Producer Rick Rubin knew how to frame this new voice. "Whatever the thing in front of you, make it the best version of what it is," Rubin told Rick Beato in 2024. "That goes to [Petty's] vocal. We put it up front. [So close] sometimes you could hear him breathing. We weren't looking for perfection, but looking for reality and getting closer to who he is. Where you feel he is singing to you. I'm hearing the human behind the words."

> **"He wasn't trying to make a hit, he was trying to make sense of his life."**
>
> **Mary Wharton, Petty documentary director**

Wharton's film reinforces it, showing the Ugg-boot-wearing Petty staring directly into the camera, with his pale blue eyes confessing: "I feel much more comfortable being myself. I feel more like me."

Truly the people's rock star, Petty had always made music for the tribe, for outsiders like himself. But for the first time, he wasn't writing to empower fans or to rally an audience. He was writing for himself. "To me, the idea of going on with it and continuing to try to do your best work, it's a natural thing to keep myself interested," he admitted. "If I think it's not going to be great, I don't want to do it. And if something is coming out like something you've done a million times, I know enough to walk away, let's go on to something else."

The Heartbreakers weren't ready for "something else." But did they even have a choice? *Wildflowers* was going to be a solo album. Stan Lynch, an original Heartbreaker, had never forgiven Petty for making his first solo album, *Full Moon Fever*, without him – the only Heartbreaker not to appear on the record. Lynch called the songs weak, and made noises about Petty plotting to go solo and drag guitarist and songwriting partner Mike Campbell along.



Talking things through: Petty and *Wildflowers* producer Rick Rubin.

"*The Waiting* always reminds me of Stan," Petty said later. "He's the only drummer in the world who could play it. Nobody could play that song but him." But by 1992 Petty had had enough. He quietly polled the band about

ROBERT SEBREE/PRESS/GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

firing Lynch, and no one told him not to. "For him to leave was a major change," Petty admitted. "So *Wildflowers* is kind of Mark Two Heartbreakers."

Even his record label felt like dead weight. Petty's relationship with MCA had been rocky from the start: lawsuits, bankruptcies, fights over pricing and creative control. He knew he had to get out. At a dinner with Warner Bros. chairman Mo Ostin, he was told: "I'd sign you on the spot." Petty covertly inked the deal, and hid the contract until MCA's obligations were satisfied with 1993's *Greatest Hits*.

That left Jeff Lynne, his friend, Wilbury brother and producer of both *Full Moon Fever* and the Heartbreakers collaboration *Into The Great Wide Open*. Petty admired, respected and genuinely liked Lynne but feared stagnation. "We were making a certain kind of record," he told *Rolling Stone*. "If we did any more, it wasn't a great idea. I felt I have to take off on my own, see what all this adds up to." The records had gone platinum, the songs had filled stadiums. But Petty was restless. He wanted risk. He wanted to hear what Tom Petty sounded like without frills.

Enter Rick Rubin, barefoot Zen archer of hip-hop and metal. Rubin hadn't grown up a Petty fan. "I usually liked much harder stuff," he admitted in Wharton's film. But *Full Moon Fever* cracked him open. "I listened to *Runnin' Down A Dream* all day every day in my car for a year." By chance – or fate – Rubin and Petty crossed paths on a Warner Bros jet in 1992.

According to Adria Petty, who was on that flight, her father was initially skeptical about the producer. In a 2020 interview on the Broken Record podcast, she recalled Tom's first impression: "My dad comes back and he's like: 'He's not a corporate man. He looks like a homeless guy, and he is wearing no shoes."

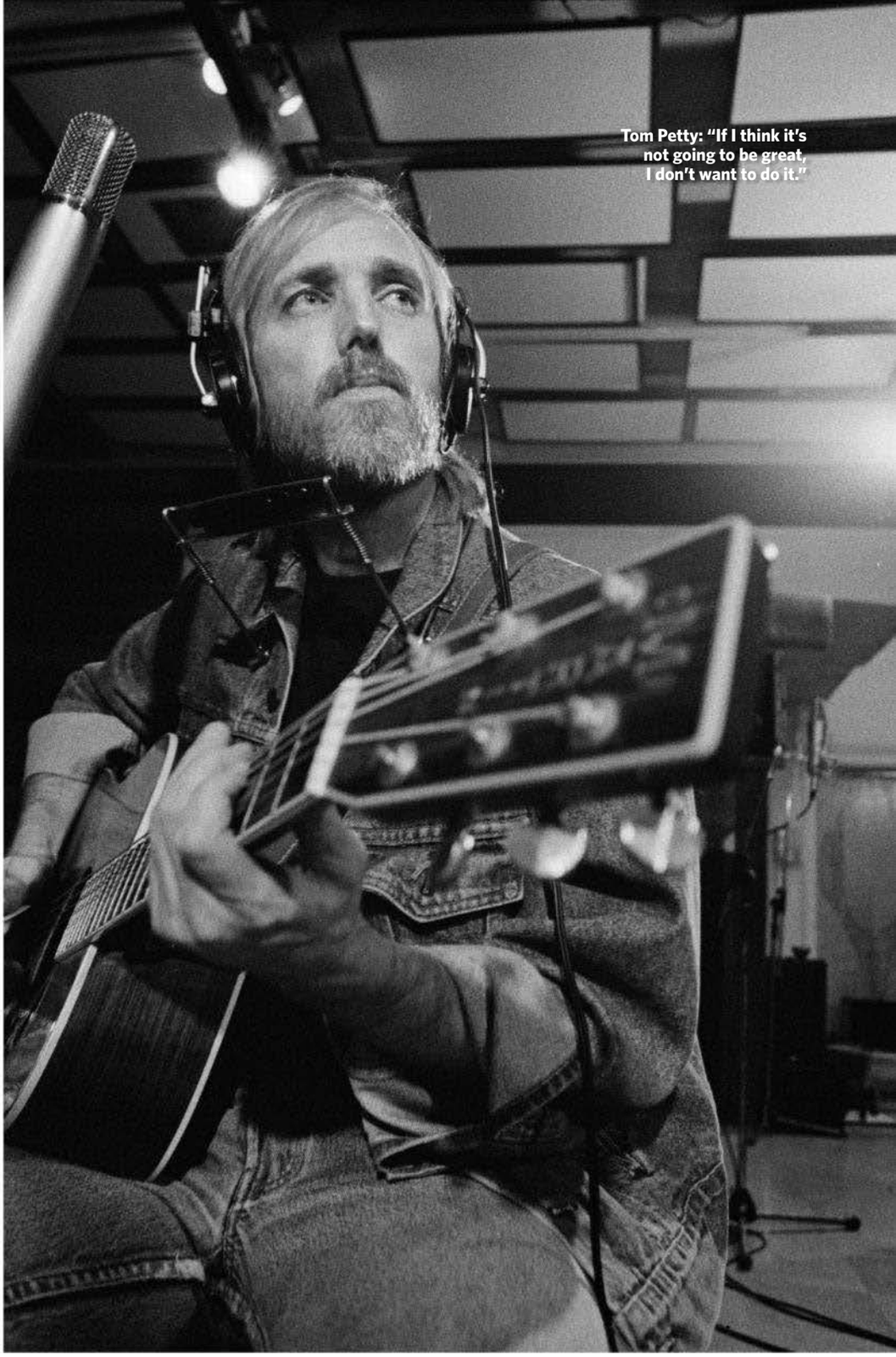
But during the flight he seemed to thaw a little when he noticed Rubin was listening to Neil Young albums. Somewhere over Ohio, a conversation about Bob Dylan – they had both attended a Dylan tribute concert – sparked Petty's interest. By the time the plane landed in Los Angeles, they'd agreed to try something together.

"*Wildflowers* scared him, because he's not really sure why it's as good as it is."

Rick Rubin

Their sessions began casually at Petty's Encino home. Rubin would come over and Tom would play three or four songs. This went on for two years. By the end, Petty had written close to 70 songs, 30 of which would make up the *Wildflowers* sessions. It was the most prolific period of his life, and also the most mystifying. "I can't really figure out how that keeps happening," Petty told me later. "They just keep appearing. I swear I feel like it's never going to happen again. If someone said: 'You have to write an album in six months', I'd think: 'Oh god, I can't do it.' Somehow it happens again."

He hated the idea of dissecting songwriting.



Tom Petty: "If I think it's not going to be great, I don't want to do it."

ROBERT SEBREE/PRESS/GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

"I've always been annoyed when I see songwriters on television elaborating about what they wrote," he said. "It has never been like that for me. I've never sat down and gone: 'I'm gonna write a song about this', and then did it. I just sit down and start to play, and the next thing I know it's somehow there. You're damn lucky to get one. Getting a good one is so hard."

That's why what happened with the song *Wildflowers* boggled his mind. It gave him a sense that he might really have a pipeline to the divine. Or as he used to glibly say: "Every song has already been written, you just have to tune yourself in to the cosmic radio station." But it's not clear that he really believed that. Until it happened to him.

But that day in his home studio, it did. *Wildflowers* descended whole, like a transmission he was picking up on a private frequency. *Crawling Back To You* and *It's Good To Be King* felt less like compositions, more like confessions. Even *You Don't Know How It Feels*, which became the unlikely hit, sounded like a shrug more than an anthem: the line '*Let me get to the point, let's roll another joint*' got the song banned on MTV and VH1, forcing him to alter the lyrics.

For a man who had defined himself by anthems – *Refugee*, *I Won't Back Down*, *American Girl* – this shift was seismic. "I'm real bored with anthemic," he said flatly. "I did it. I'm not trying to do it again. Younger people should do that. I wanted something quieter." Quieter but not smaller. These songs whispered directly into your ear. Instead of shouting at the rafters, they exhaled.

Petty was startled by what he heard on playback. Could he have made this album 10 years ago? It was a long journey to self, but rewarding once you arrived. "It's more ➢

fun to be yourself all the time," he explained. "I'm not saying I'm the perfect person, because I'm not at all. But I am right up front all the time. Which is hard for people. It's hard for my family sometimes." The family he couldn't save – Jane, his daughters, the unravelling home – haunted the record in not-so-difficult-to-break coded form. The studio was the one place where he could control the chaos.

"There was definitely tension in his life," Rick Rubin told Warren Zanes for the latter's 2015 book *Petty: The Biography*. "[It]seemed he didn't really want to leave the studio. Like he didn't want to do anything else in his life. I think he wanted to take his mind off whatever was going on at home."

By the time Petty settled into Sound City then Mike Campbell's home studio with Rubin, the sessions became less about recording tracks and more about building a shelter. While life outside the studio was collapsing, life inside it was strangely simple: play, listen, write, repeat.

Petty didn't hide that truth. "Being on stage is a pretty comfortable place," he once admitted. "Life is much more complicated than a rock'n'roll set."

In the studio he could orchestrate every detail – the hush of an acoustic guitar, the whine of a harmonica, the subtle lift of Steve Ferrone's hi-hat. The chaos of marriage and family couldn't be tuned or equalised, but in the studio he could make sense of it all.

And he never stopped. Rubin described how Petty would call him over just to play a handful of new songs, casually dropping confessions on tape as though he were keeping a journal.

The truth is, *Wildflowers* was meant to be a double album. Petty had the material, Rubin supported the vision, and the band were behind it. Warner Bros, however, had reservations. A sprawling, 25-track confessional wasn't exactly how they wanted to launch Petty's new era with the label. So the guillotine came down. Ten songs were axed. Four of them – *California, Hope You Never, Hung Up And Overdue* and *Climb That Hill* – were instead included in the 1996 Jennifer Aniston film *She's The One*. Rod Stewart took *Leave Virginia Alone*, and the rest were hidden in vaults, safes and bedroom closets.

Sequences were reordered, then reordered again. "That took us about three months," Petty kids in Wharton's film. But you get the idea he was telling the truth.

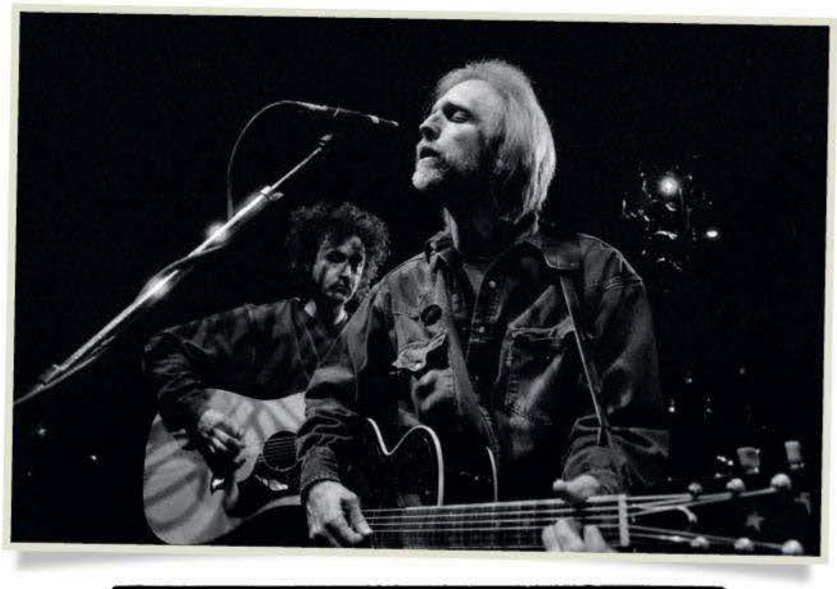
Some say Petty didn't fight as hard as he might have for a double album. But given how conscious he was of the price of music for his fans, a double CD would have been cost-prohibitive.

Yet even reduced to 15 tracks the record felt infinite, a universe unto itself. Petty still wanted to release the ones that didn't make the cut, which he felt were not inferior in any way. The discarded songs would emerge decades later on the *Wildflowers & All the Rest* package, confirming what insiders had known all along: Petty wasn't exaggerating when he said this was his most fertile, most mystical period.

As in awe as he was of his beneficent muse, he was reportedly equally terrified by it. Adria Petty doesn't believe it: "I never heard him say that!" But Rick Rubin claimed he was haunted by the album. "*Wildflowers* scared him, because he's not really sure why it's as good as it is," Rubin explains in Wharton's documentary. "He felt he couldn't make *Wildflowers* 2," the producer added.

It had never happened to him before. He didn't know what had thrown open the floodgates that allowed songs to just appear.

"I can write a song very easily, but it won't necessarily be any good," he explained in 2006. "There's a bit of craft involved; I don't like to rely on that. I have got to wait for the ones that are really good. Often during an album, I write six really bad ones and then I write a good one. Randy Newman says that if you sit there four hours, something will happen."



"There was definitely tension in his life. It seemed he didn't really want to leave the studio."

Rick Rubin

If the album frightened Petty, it comforted everyone else. Fans took the songs as survival manuals, lullabies, and eulogies. *You Don't Know How It Feels* became a crowd favourite with its weary, wry invitation; audiences regularly shouted out the '*Let's roll another joint*' line at Heartbreakers shows.

People loved *Wildflowers* because it felt as if Petty had stopped playing rock star and started playing human being. He wasn't the general barking anthems any more, he was one of us, lost, hurting, trying to figure it out. And with that unvarnished honesty, he gave his listeners permission to do the same.

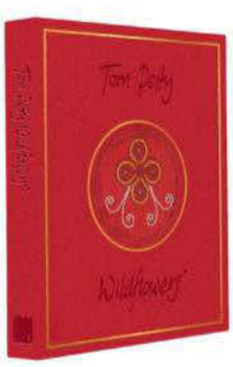
When *Wildflowers* finally came out in November 1994, it went platinum faster than any other album in Petty's career. But the real victory wasn't in the sales figures, it was in how deeply the songs sank into people's lives. This wasn't just music for car radios or stadium singalongs. It was music that people carried with them into break-ups, recoveries, long nights and quiet mornings.

Over the years, *Wildflowers* turned into the record people used to measure themselves against. Its lyrics appeared in yearbooks, tattoos, even etched into stone. The title track has been played graveside more times than anyone can count. After Petty's death in 2017, Heartbreakers drummer Steve Ferrone (who replaced Stan Lynch during the recording of the album) had the line '*Most things I worry about never happen anyway*' from *Crawling Back To You* tattooed on his forearm. Which was a clear break with protocol, since Petty used to joke that none of the Heartbreakers had tattoos, nor were they allowed to get tattoos as long as they were in the band. (None of them except Ferrone ever did.)

Part of the afterlife of this album, and Petty himself, comes from what was left unsaid. Fans knew there was more – the missing half of the double album. In 2020, *Wildflowers & All the Rest* revealed the breadth of Petty's vision: 25 songs, each one carrying a fragment of the man at his rawest. Hearing them together was like finding the missing pages of a diary you'd read your whole life but never fully understood.

And then came the film. Mary Wharton's *Somewhere You Feel Free: The Making Of Wildflowers* stitched those unearthed reels of 16mm film into a portrait of Petty, then found some more. Releasing another 30 minutes of footage of Petty being interviewed – something he mostly hated – this year and making the film available in Blu-ray helped complete the picture of a great many people's favorite rock star. The one who bridged the gap between the common man and the superstars who live in Valhalla. The one who was like the rest of us.

That's why *Wildflowers* lives on. It's not the loudest record in his catalogue, not the one with the biggest hits. But it's the one that feels closest to the bone. Thirty years later, people still press play and hear themselves in it – the sadness, the humour, the hope. Tom Petty thought he was just making another record. Instead he left behind a masterpiece that people carry like scripture, a record that still whispers, even now: "You belong somewhere you feel free."

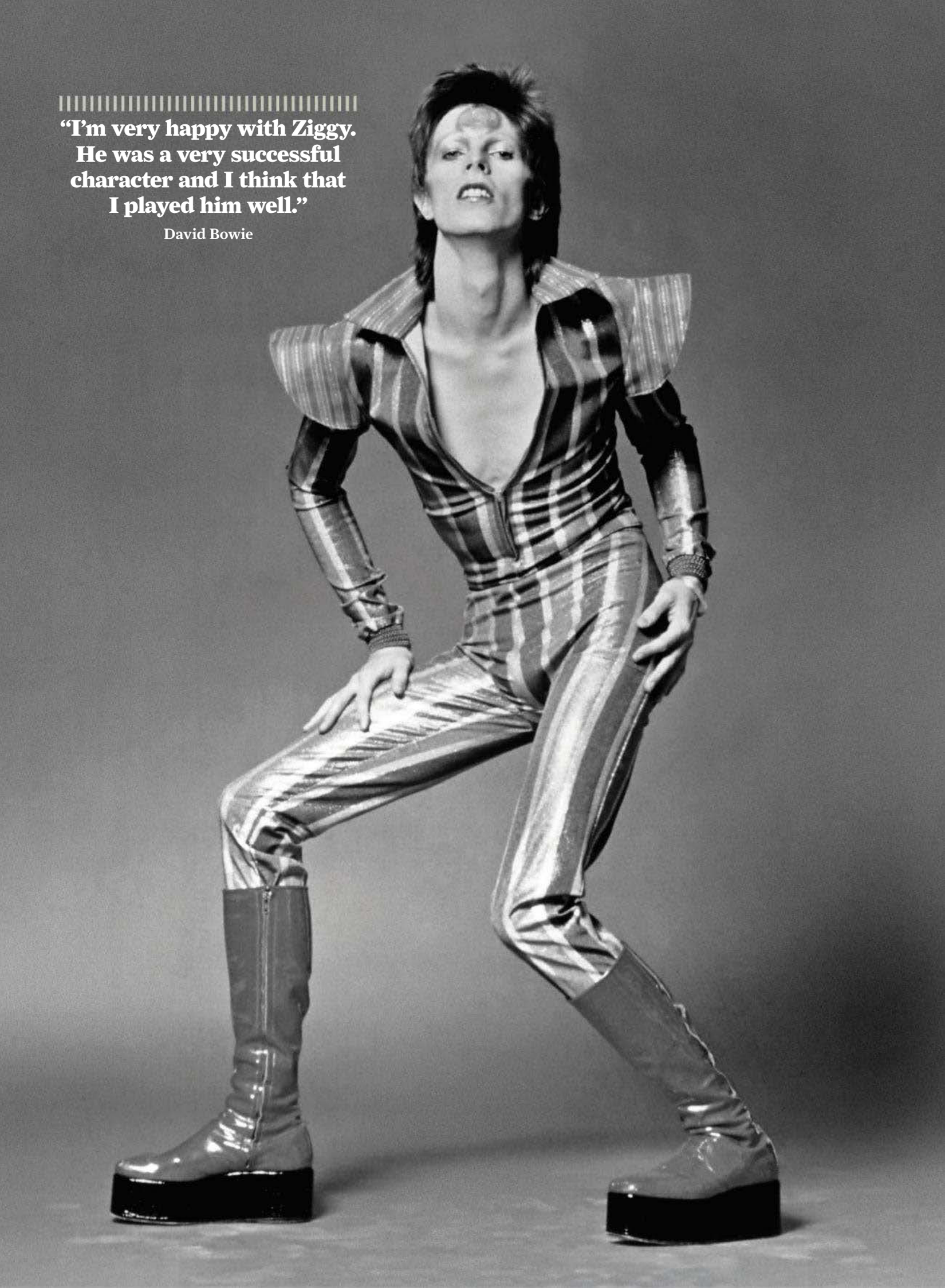


Somewhere You Feel Free: The Making Of Wallflowers is out now on Blu-ray. Tom Petty: Wildflowers from Genesis Publications is due December 2025. Pre-order the Collector's and Deluxe edition now at wildflowersbook.com

ROBERT SEBREE/PRESS/GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

ROBERT SEBREE/PRESS/GENESIS PUBLICATIONS

Life was often a dark place for Petty in the time leading up to and during the making of *Wildflowers*.



"I'm very happy with Ziggy. He was a very successful character and I think that I played him well."

David Bowie

LOVING THE ALIEN

By 1972, glam rock was kicking in, but **David Bowie** was still waiting for his big break. Then he hit on the character that would redefine him for ever. Band members, friends and associates tell the story of *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars*.

Words: **Julian Marszalek**

Over half a century on from his creation, Ziggy Stardust arguably remains the most beloved character from David Bowie's illustrious six-decade career. Combining glamour and a then-outrageous sexuality, this bisexual alien rock star fell to earth as the 60s dream had turned sour in the wake of Altamont, and the economic boom of the previous decade had finally burst.

The music scene was becoming as grim as the outside world. In the UK Clive Dunn's mawkish *Grandad* was No.1 at the start of '71, and at the close it was Benny Hill's *Ernie (The Fastest Milkman In The West)*. By '72 the likes of Donny Osmond and David Cassidy were hitting the singles top spot, while compilations dominated the album chart.

Yet out of this morass of tedium came a glimmer of hope. First, the Marc Bolan-fronted T.Rex brought the glitter to the pop kids, and Slade stomped their stack heels hard. Then, as if from nowhere, former one-hit wonder David Bowie introduced Ziggy Stardust and swept aside all competition, and left a legacy that is still felt to this day.

Having failed to crack America in January 1971, Bowie returned to the UK. Encouraged by his wife Angie and manager Tony Defries, Bowie developed the idea of the 'ultimate pop idol' by combining his underground heroes Lou Reed and Iggy Pop with cult British rock'n'roller Vince Taylor.

David Bowie: I wanted to define the archetype messiah rock star, that's all I wanted to do. And I used the trappings of kabuki theatre, mime technique, fringe New York music – my reference was the Velvet Underground. It was a British view of American street energy.

Woody Woodmansey (drummer): Angie was a very flash-talking, buzzing American girl. She got him on what he wanted to do before anybody else. So when David had a few doubts in the beginning or when he said: "I'm thinking of doing this", she said: "Do it, David!" If she hadn't been there it might not have gone the way it did. She was very influential.

> **"I wanted to define the archetype messiah rock star; that's all I wanted to do."**
>
> **David Bowie**

Suzi Ronson (hairstylist, later Mick Ronson's wife): Angela really was a driving force behind David. She was very influential with the costumes. She made him brave. She would have her hair cut first if she thought that he wouldn't like it.

Dana Gillespie (singer and confidante to Bowie): She was always encouraging him and always on his side. She would always be dressing him and helped with his image. She was always a positive force.

In a January 1972 interview with Melody Maker*'s Michael Watts, Bowie unveiled his new Ziggy image and made an outrageous claim that reverberated across the nation: "I'm gay and always have been, even when I was David Jones."*

Mick Ronson (guitarist): When David came out, I felt a bit funny about it. My family took a bit of flak for it; I gave my mother and father a car, and somebody threw paint over it.

Trevor Bolder (bassist): There were plenty of girls. I think he was spinning them along, but it sold papers and therefore records, so we didn't give a toss.

While Marc Bolan spearheaded the glam charge with T.Rex by smearing glitter under his eyes, swapping his hippie gear for satin clothing and altering his music for a teen audience, and Slade's Dave Hill became ever more sartorially outré, Bowie set about creating something unique.

David Bowie: Ziggy Stardust was this surreal cartoon character brought to life. He was half out of sci-fi rock and half out of Japanese theatre. The clothes were, at that time, simply outrageous. Nobody had seen anything like them before.

Mick Ronson: Just after *Hunky Dory* and before *Ziggy*, there was a lull in the scene; it needed ➤

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Hammersmith Odeon on the *Ziggy* tour, July 3, 1973, when Bowie announced from the stage that he was retiring Ziggy Stardust.

jarring and excitement. Bowie's dressing us up and the make-up was needed. It wasn't what I usually did, but it was exciting. On stage I became someone else.

Trevor Bolder: We were his droogs. David edged us into [wearing the] clothes. Originally he wanted us to wear bowler hats and boiler suits like in the movie *A Clockwork Orange*, but we refused to do that so he commissioned our stage clothes.

Woody Woodmansey: We were in Liberty in the material department, and David and Angie were passing rolls of material down. I thought: "Oh, nice, we're getting new curtains, but they're a bit bright." Then a few days later he got a friend of his in who's a really incredible fashion designer, and we started having the clothes made from the material. The hair came about a month later.

David Bowie: Writing a song for me never rang true. I found it quite easy to write for the artists I would create. I did find it much easier, having created a Ziggy, to then write for him, even though it was me doing it.

Bowie's fourth album, Hunky Dory, *was barely finished when he and the band swiftly reconvened at Trident Studios in London to begin work on the next one, which was eventually released in June 1972.*

Ken Scott (producer): One of David's talents was picking a team to give him exactly what he wanted at any given time. And that team knew what it was supposed to be. We didn't have to tell each other all the time, we just instinctively knew this is what's going to happen here, this is what's going to happen there.

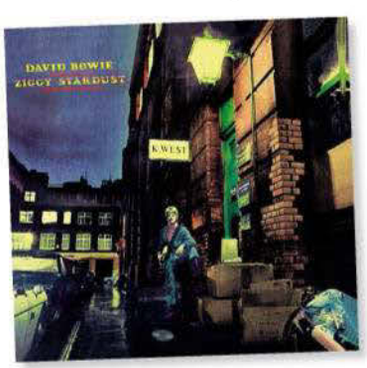
David Bowie: Mick Ronson was very much a salt-of-the-earth type, the blunt northerner with a defiantly masculine personality, so what you got was the old-fashioned yin and yang thing. As a rock duo, I thought we were as good as Mick and Keith.

"When he did *Starman* on *Top Of The Pops*, that blew me – and everybody – away."

Joe Elliott, Def Leppard

Ken Scott: *Ziggy Stardust* didn't start as a concept album. *It Ain't Easy* was left over from the recording of *Hunky Dory*.

Angie Bowie (wife and mover and shaker): David is a fantastic musician, because his approach is not studied, it's by ear. He has an ability to pluck a song from those first moments he plays with an instrument.



Ken Scott: His greatest talent was performing in a studio. Ninety-five per cent of the songs he recorded were done first take, beginning to end.

Woody Woodmansey: Mick didn't really know how good he was. He would do a solo first take, never played it before, and it would blow us away.

Ken Scott: The mainstay of the whole story – the 'man coming from up there somewhere' – is *Starman*. That was the last thing recorded for *Ziggy* Stardust and... it was never meant to be on the album. The album was sent into RCA, and they said: "The album's great, but we don't hear a single. Can you go and record a single?" Of course David could! He goes away and comes back with *Starman*, and then suddenly the whole album is a concept album.

With the album in the bag, Bowie took to the road in his new guise as Ziggy Stardust. Beginning in tiny clubs, the band's popularity began to rise throughout 1972, which culminated in two sell-out shows at the Rainbow Theatre in London.

Kris Needs (journalist and author): David told me: "Next time I come back [to Aylesbury Friars] I'm going to be something different. I'm going to be a big rock star." And sure enough, the following January, in 1972, he returned as Ziggy Stardust. It was the first time in the world he'd played as Ziggy Stardust, and he came out to the Beethoven music from *A Clockwork Orange* in his silver jumpsuit, with the Spiders, and nothing was going to be the same again.

David Bowie: During the very early days of *Ziggy Stardust*, we often used to play these fairly grotty clubs. Backstage one night I was desperate to use the bathroom. I was dressed in my full battle finery of Tokyo-spaceboy and a pair of shoes high enough that it induced nosebleeds. I went up to

the promoter – actually I tottered over to the promoter – and I asked: "Could you please tell me where the lavatory is?" And he said: "Yeah. Look down that corridor. On the far end of that wall, you see that sink? There you go." I said: "My good man, I'm not taking a piss in the sink." He said: "Listen, son, if it's good enough for Shirley Bassey it's good enough for you."

Nick Kent (journalist): I went to the first official Spiders From Mars gig in London, at Imperial College. After four bars of *Hang On To Yourself*, the PA just stopped. Bowie was standing there, and for a split second you could see the panic in his eyes, thinking: "What the fuck am I going to do?" What he did was put his hands on his hips in this really camp way, and proceeded to give a rundown of what he was wearing. He just did this camp routine. Then after about a minute the sound came back on. In that minute, Ziggy Stardust's destiny was manifest.

Mick Rock (photographer): The fellatio picture is one of the most striking images from the Ziggy period. If you look at the picture, he's chomping on Mick's guitar. He was hugging Mick's buttocks in a cute way, but he only did that because of the way Mick was swinging his guitar around.

Kris Needs: Bowie returned to Friars for a third performance on July 15.

Trevor Bolder: Friars in Aylesbury on July 15 was the big one. That was sold out. Everybody wanted to see the band. So that was when we realised it was taking off.

Lindsay Kemp (dancer and mentor): That Rainbow show was a big shock. When I saw how he captured an audience of thousands and knew exactly what to do. It was absolutely electric. I was numb from beginning to end.

The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars, *to give it its full title, was released in June 1972. A loose concept album, it's held together by the idea of an alien, bisexual rock star who visits the Earth during the planet's last five years before he's killed by his fans. Straddling the serious rock album market and the singles-orientated pop chart, it rocks hard on* Ziggy Stardust, Suffragette City *and* Hang On To Yourself, *and revels in the pop sensibility of* Starman *and* Soul Love.

Crucial to Bowie's meteoric rise was his appearance on the July, 1972 episode of Top Of The Pops *performing Starman. For many fans, this was the moment they irrevocably fell under Bowie's spell.*

Nick Rhodes (Duran Duran): I think people have forgotten the significance *Top Of The Pops* had throughout the seventies. It really focused the entire nation on music, on what was going on.

Trevor Bolder: We went to the pub together; nobody knew who we were. *Top Of The Pops* changed all that.

Joe Elliot (Def Leppard): *Starman* on *Top Of The Pops*, that blew me – and everybody – away.

Trevor Bolder: We did *Starman* live, straight through, and then went to the BBC bar.

Starman: Bowie/Ziggy in New York, 1973.

GETTY X2

Video made the radio star: Bowie and the Spiders' play *Starman* on TV.

People kept coming up to us and asking if we were in *Doctor Who*.

Robert Smith (The Cure): I immediately put on some of my sister's make-up. I loved how odd it made me look, and the fact that it upset people.

Mary Conelan: (writing to the David Bowie fan club) David Bowie on *Top Of The Pops* – it took hours for the grin on my face to wear off! Auntie Beeb has gone Bowie-mad! The establishment has now recognised you as a STAR, David. Long may it last!

Trevor Bolder: It all happened after that night. We went out on the road and did a British tour, and where we'd [previously been] playing to maybe fifty to sixty people a night in small venues, we were selling them out.

As Bowie's star rose, Tony Defries's MainMan management company, with whom he was signed, took on new clients including Lou Reed, Mott The Hoople and Iggy & The Stooges. Reed's album Transformer *and Mott's* All The Young Dudes *were produced by Bowie, and he mixed Iggy & The Stooges'* Raw Power.

Kris Needs: Bowie plugged into Mott the same way that he'd plugged into Iggy and Lou Reed. He was inspired, but also vaguely frightened, by these highly influential people, so he ended up working with them. They were giving him something. Lou Reed gave him a New York attitude with his lyrics, Iggy gave him the wildest rock star-type mentality, and Mott gave him a sense of danger.

Iggy Pop (Iggy And The Stooges): We did a session in a little room called Western Recorders in Hollywood. It was David Bowie, [Stooges guitarist] James Williamson and myself to mix it.

> **"One of David's talents was picking a team to give him exactly what he wanted at any given time."**
>
> **Ken Scott, producer**

And I think it was done in two days, or a day and a half. The mix on that sounds, to me, a lot like the records David was making at the time. He took off the bottom, and at the top and there was a lot of clarity. And you really, really heard the vocal and the lead guitar.

Ian Hunter (Mott The Hoople): He played *All The Young Dudes* on an acoustic guitar. I knew straight away it was a hit. We grabbed hold of it.

James Williamson (Iggy And The Stooges): I could never stand Bowie personally. I was one of the people saying I didn't like the mix [of *Raw Power*], but in retrospect it was actually a good job.

Lou Reed: *Transformer* is easily my best-produced album. Together as a team, [Bowie and Ronson] are terrific.

Angie Bowie: David was very smart. He'd been evaluating the market for his work, calculating his moves, and monitoring his competition. And the only really serious competition in his market niche, he'd concluded, consisted of Lou Reed and, maybe, Iggy Pop. So what did David do? He co-opted them.

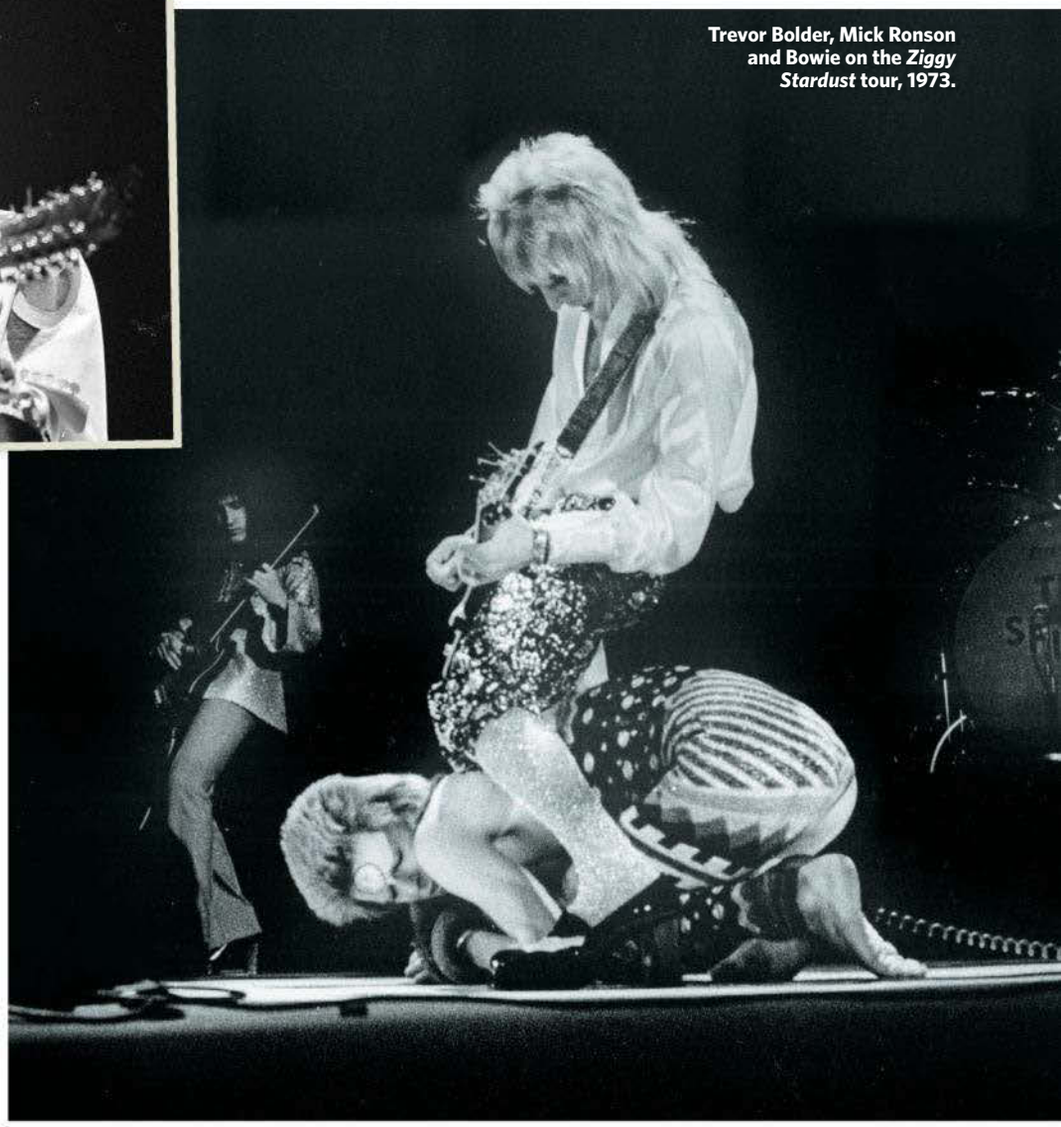
As the Ziggy Stardust *tour and promotion continued to roll on, the character of Ziggy began to consume Bowie.*

David Bowie: It became apparent to me that I had an incredible shyness. It was much easier for me to keep on with the Ziggy thing, off the stage as well as on.

Ian Hunter: He came in with an entourage and he'd gone a bit weird. His clothes were more flamboyant and he was starting to live his image to the hilt.

SHUTTERSTOCK

Ziggy played guitar...


Trevor Bolder, Mick Ronson and Bowie on the *Ziggy Stardust* tour, 1973.

David Bowie: I wasn't getting rid of Ziggy at all. In fact I was joining forces with him. This doppelganger of myself was becoming one and the same person. And then you start on this trail of chaotic and psychological destruction. You become what's called a 'drug casualty' at the end of it all.

Trevor Bolder: We lived and breathed the Spiders. As the tour went on, we actually became the characters, to go along with the Ziggy thing. So we tried to live up to people's expectations of us when we came off stage.

David Bowie: I was having a ball at first, and then around the end of the Ziggy period I found drugs in a major way. If that hadn't happened, I wonder how different life would've been... But I can't dwell on that. In all seriousness, that's why it all went wrong, then, when I was virtually on top of the world. I can't say it wasn't fun; the whole of that time was terrific.

With the British dates ending in triumph, manager Tony Defries booked a 28-date US tour. Employing the risky and expensive strategy of positioning David Bowie as a superstar, the tour fared well on the USA's east and west coasts, but less so across the Midwest. And while the addition of pianist Mike Garson widened the scope of the music, it unwittingly planted the seeds of the demise of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars the band.

Leee Black Childers (MainMan US rep): He had two bodyguards and he dressed them up in karate costumes and they flanked him wherever he went. Everyone assumed then that he was just as big as Mick Jagger or Elton John. And of course he wasn't. We were having to create this myth.

Woody Woodmansey: I was sat on an airplane with [Mike Garson], and I was reading a magazine and there was a Lamborghini in it. I went: "Oh, that's nice." And he went: "Why don't you buy one?" I went: "Yeah, I wish." He said: "You must be able to afford one." And I went: "Actually, no." I went: "What do you think I get?" And he went: "Well I know what I get." And he told me, and it was, like, three times what I got.

Trevor Bolder: We went to Bowie and said: "Unless things change and you give us the money, we're going home."

Angie Bowie: David was furious, just furious. "They can't hold me up like that," he told me. "I don't care who they are, I simply won't have that kind of disloyalty." From then on, his passive-aggressive machinery engaged gears and the lads' days were numbered.

A combination of MainMan's parlous financial affairs, the rhythm section's perceived mutiny and Bowie's increasing boredom with the music he'd created saw him finally 'retire' Ziggy Stardust at their performance at London's Hammersmith Odeon on July 3, 1973. From the stage, he announced: "Of all the shows on this tour, this particular show will remain with us the longest. Because not only is this the last show on the tour, but it's the last show that we'll ever do."

Scott Richardson (confidante to David Bowie and Mick Ronson): To break up a band like that is astonishing. I have to credit Bowie with having a lot of courage to say: "I'm not coming back."

Trevor Bolder: He's fuckin' sacked us!

As all the children boogie, a trail of those who David Bowie influenced and whose lives he touched are like signposts on popular music's highway.

Siouxsie Sioux (Siouxsie And The Banshees): Bowie was the catalyst who'd brought a lot of us – the so-called Bromley Contingent – together. And out of that really small group of people, a lot happened.

Robert Smith: I look back at some the things we've done and I can see echoes of some of Bowie's stuff in it. I got my dream come true when he invited me to sing with him at his birthday in New York.

David Bowie: I'm very happy with Ziggy. He was a very successful character and I think that I played him well.

"We went to Bowie and said: 'Unless things change and you give us the money, we're going home.'"
Trevor Bolder

Additional Sources: Starman – David Bowie: The Definitive Biography by Paul Trynka; David Bowie: A Life by Dylan Jones; Melody Maker; Iggy Pop: Open Up And Bleed by Paul Trynka; Raw Power: An interview With Iggy Pop, Trey Zenker, Tidal; Mojo.

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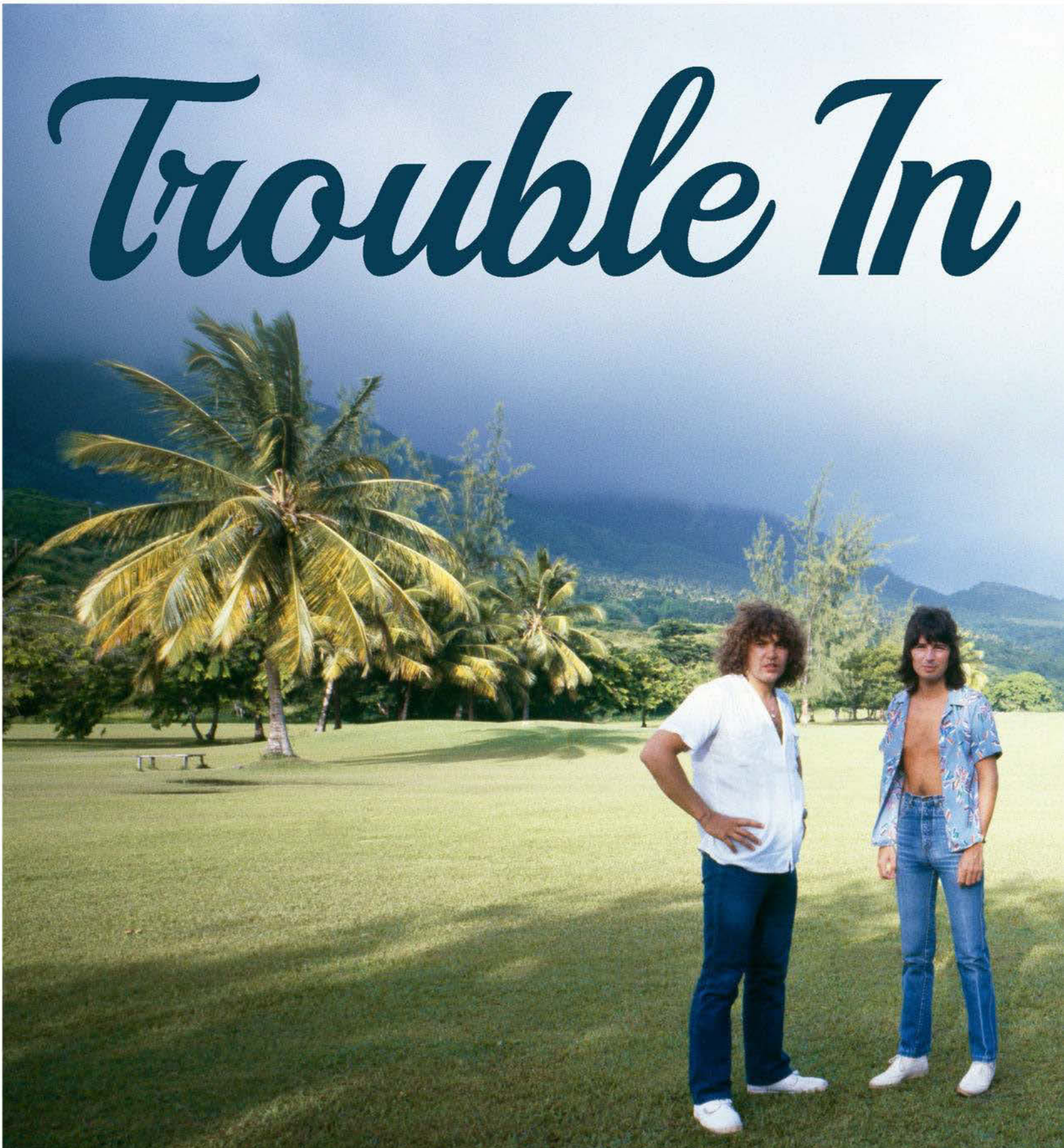
Trouble In



UFO stood poised on the precipice of the big time as the 1970s drew to a close, their tough-kernelled, irresistible melodies and a seemingly unquenchable appetite for hedonism placing them among the decade's most fascinating and entertaining bands. Things had grown incrementally for the London-based quintet over the course of five studio albums that featured the German wunderkind Michael Schenker on guitar – an artistic and commercial evolution that looked set to establish UFO among the biggest rock groups in the world. But for all of his undisputed genius as a musician, Schenker was temperamental. He and his party-animal bandmates clashed violently on a number of levels, and Schenker – still only 23 years old – had quit the band and been talked back on board on a number of occasions before walking out for good in 1978 during the mixing of their double live album *Strangers In The Night*.

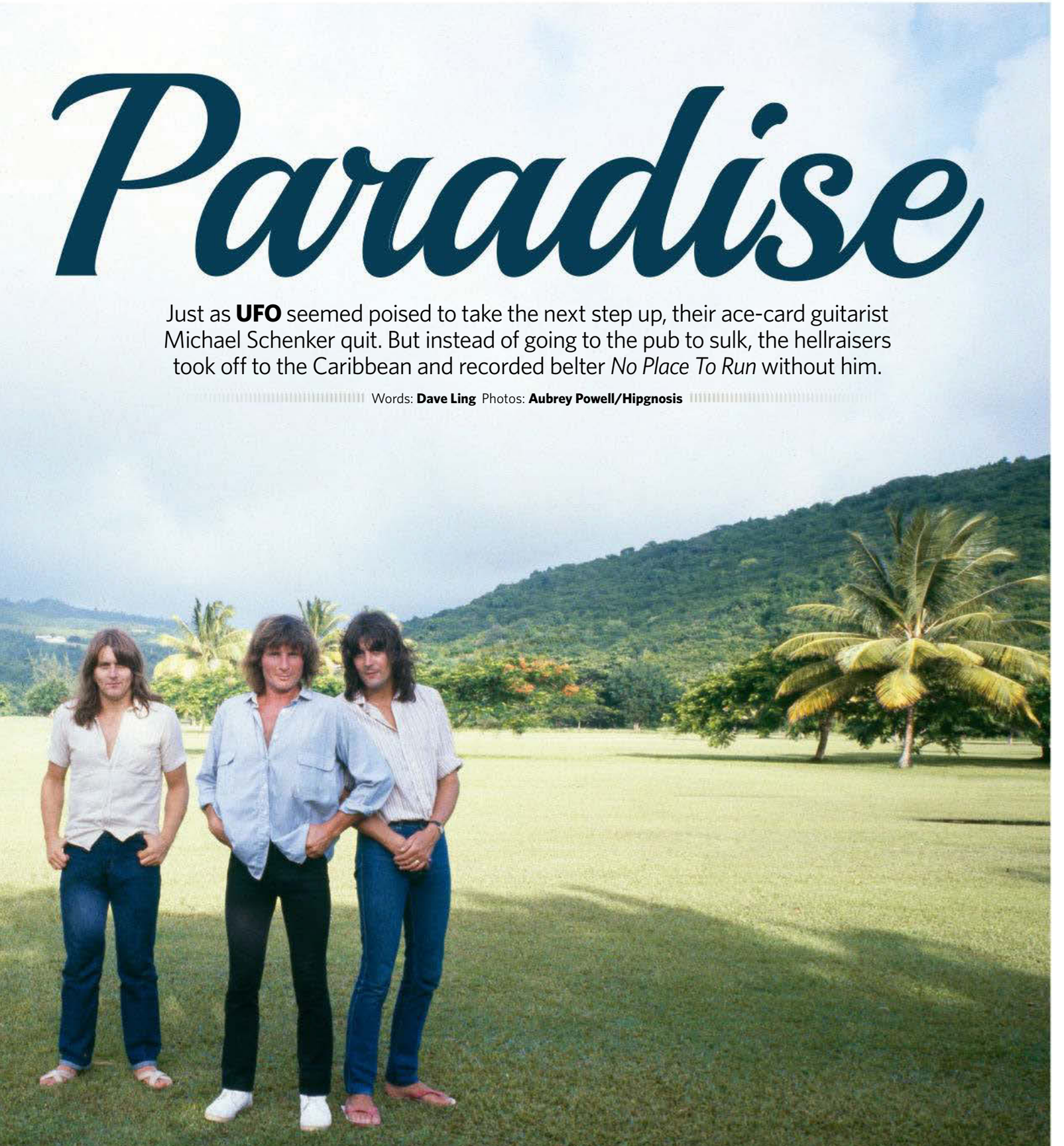
Schenker's exit wasn't due to the ongoing rivalry with singer Phil Mogg (a tense relationship that had at times become physical). Nor was it about Schenker's stage fright, or the meds he took to control it. It wasn't the latest argument about the respective lifestyles of what had clearly become two factions: Schenker on one side, and Mogg, bassist Pete Way, guitarist/keyboard player Paul Raymond and drummer Andy Parker (i.e. the rest of the band) on the other, although all of those reasons played cumulative parts.

In the end, what pushed the Schenker over the edge was producer Ron Nevison's refusal to allow him to polish up his performance on the guitar showcase track on *Strangers*, *Rock Bottom*.

Paradise

Just as **UFO** seemed poised to take the next step up, their ace-card guitarist Michael Schenker quit. But instead of going to the pub to sulk, the hellraisers took off to the Caribbean and recorded belter *No Place To Run* without him.

Words: **Dave Ling** Photos: **Aubrey Powell/Hipgnosis**



"Ron had insisted on leaving *Strangers In The Night* as it was, but Michael had wanted to change something – two notes, probably – and that's when Michael walked out of the studio with the words: 'Poor, poor *Rock Bottom*'," Mogg recollects with a shake of the head. "It was the last we saw of him."

The singer continues: "By that point, Michael was getting such fan worship, he had probably started believing it. Also, he wanted to start doing his own thing – to be his own boss. It was quite a shame, because by then UFO were right on the cusp of moving from arenas into stadiums. Of course we were pissed off, but the way we looked at things the band's value was worth more than just one person."

And so it would prove. The album that demonstrated that life could continue – and indeed flourish – within UFO was *No Place To Run*. Their first record of the new decade welcomed back a familiar face in Paul Chapman, who for a year had been UFO's second guitarist to Schenker from 1974, followed by a stint on a US tour in '77 due to one of Schenker's 'disappearing acts'.

Although it would prove to be the right choice, the notion of re-hiring the former Skid Row and Lone Star man, whose drinking capacity landed him with the nickname Tonka (after the supposedly indestructible children's toy of the 70s), was not unanimous. Paul Raymond once told me that he had been "dead against" bringing him in.

"That may have been so, and I suppose I can see why," Mogg reasons now, "but Paul's joining was for the good of the band. And from what I remember, the objections of the other Paul [Raymond] were not terribly vocal." ➢

Pete Way would also claim that none other than Edward Van Halen had expressed an interest in auditioning to replace Schenker, before deciding he "didn't have the bottle". Although Raymond backed up this story ("the entire course of rock history could have been rewritten"), Mogg is keen to play it down.

"We were looking at Steve Hunter [an American session guitarist who played with Alice Cooper and Lou Reed, among others] and we met a couple of other guitarists, but it was important that we got along with whoever came along next," he insists. "We had already worked with Paul, and he was an experienced guy, so he became the obvious choice."

Over the course of three further albums, Chapman would bring an admittedly chaotic sense of stability to UFO, until they crash-landed again in 1983, leading to a soap opera-style series of break-ups, line-up changes and reunions so complex they could fill an issue of *Classic Rock*.

"Paul was also a bit of a livewire," Andy Parker reflects now. But, bless his heart, he was a lot more reliable than Michael had been. Paul would always show up and play."

Ultimately, UFO survived their post-Schenker fallout, and that was largely attributable their album *No Place To Run*, which they created in a studio on the sun-kissed small Caribbean island of Monserrat, assisted by the expertise and technical know-how of the man sometimes called the fifth Beatle, producer George Martin.

As a band UFO ceased to exist when their farewell tour of Europe was cancelled in 2022, as a consequence of Mogg suffering a heart attack.

Before delving into the minutiae of *No Place To Run*, it's a good idea to explain the circumstances of this story. Regrettably, Paul Chapman and Pete Way are no longer with us, having passed within months of each other in 2020, and Paul Raymond died in 2019, leaving Mogg and Parker as the last two members that made the trip to Monserrat, where George Martin had built a studio, having fallen in love with the island during his time in the Navy. Back in 2016, days after Martin lost a battle with stomach cancer at the grand old age of 90, Way spoke at length to *Classic Rock* about the album's birth.

"George was like one of the boys, really," Way said in that 2016 interview. "He never threw his weight about or reminded you of his reputation. He was very interested in the way that we liked to work, because it really was an experiment on both sides of the equation.

"Sometimes he would ask: 'Is Phil [Mogg] coming in today?' because he was used to John Lennon and Paul McCartney having their lyrics ready," Way continued.

But Mogg's refusal to write his lyrics until the last moment has become a part of UFO folklore.

With a grin, Way continued: "George became anxious about the [lack of] words, and we'd have to placate him: 'Oh, don't worry, they're done,' when we all knew very well that Phil was down at the beach waterskiing."

"Fucking Pete Way. Unbelievable," Mogg mutters today, eyes twinkling. "It feels like he's still here, taunting me. For a start, I've waterskied

AUBREY POWELL/HIPGNOSIS

Having fun in the sun (and finding time to do some recording): (l-r) Paul 'Tonka' Chapman, Phil Mogg, Andy Parker, Paul Raymond, Pete Way.

once in my life, and that wasn't it. But I did have a bit of a block there [in Monserrat]."

"To be fair, we were ahead of the curve. A lot of the prep had been done back in London," says Andy Parker today. "We had riffs and basic ideas, but, as always with UFO, Phil liked to hear the framework of the music and then go away and write his lyrics. It always worked out fine, but it wasn't what George was used to."

"George sometimes read out my lyrics," Mogg recalls, chuckling at the memory. [Speaking in an upper-crust English voice]: "'*Joey rides the subway, fast from east to west, on the streets he's number one, some say that he's the best*' [the opening lines of *Nowhere To Run*'s title song]. And he'd ask: 'Who is this Joey? And what was he doing on the subway?' There was a bit of a culture clash."

Andy Parker is talking to *Classic Rock* from his home in Texas, Mogg in a pub in his home town of Brighton – the same one in which he and I had previously spent an entire afternoon drinking beer as Mogg introduced his new project, Moggs Motel. Eighteen months later, whippet-thin after a nasty brush with norovirus, Mogg is content to nurse a single glass of lemonade, although the air of delicious sarcasm remains.

Echoing the sentiments of Way, Parker and Mogg talk with affection and a mild air of disbelief

"We wanted to do an album with strings. I suspect George had been briefed – no, this is a rock album."

Phil Mogg

that their band somehow entered the orbit of the man who produced *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (and just about everything else The Beatles recorded).

UFO's label, Chrysalis Records, had felt that Montserrat's atmosphere of sophistication – and its distinct lack of bars – made the place a far less dangerous workplace than London or Los Angeles.

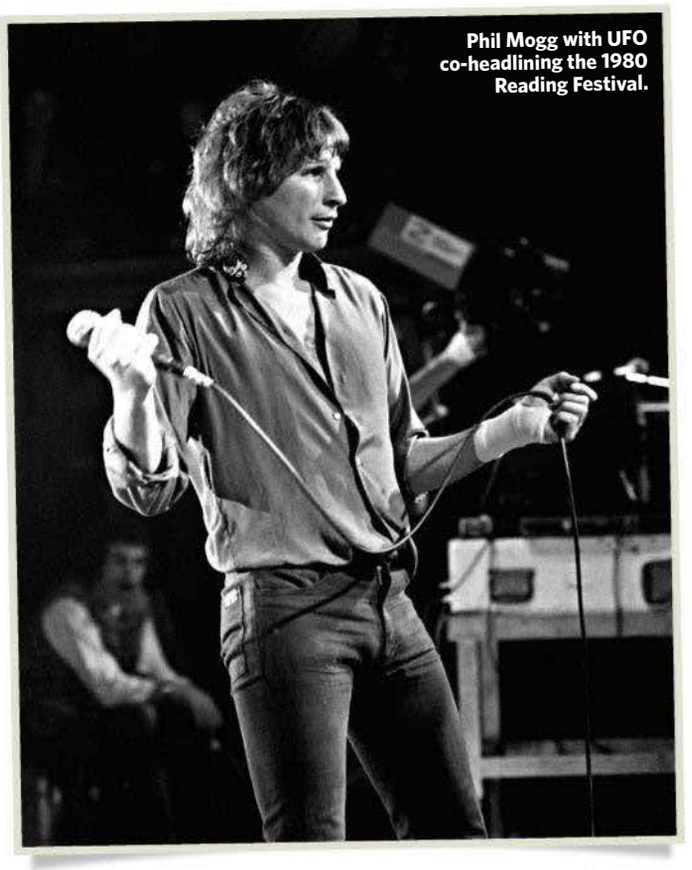
"Rubbish!" snorted Pete Way. "This was UFO! If you wanted to, you could get so completely drunk on rum that you'd end up falling over."

In his 2016 interview, Way had speculated that Chrysalis engineered the liaison with George Martin in the hope of making the band sound poppier, perhaps even teasing out a hit single. "They wanted us to do what Styx and Foreigner had done – take things to the next level," he said, laughing at the ridiculousness of the notion.

Mogg, who loathes soft rock, wrinkles his nose in disgust. "No. That would be a horrible level. That's a whole different world."

In fact, UFO became teamed with Martin due to his studio, AIR, being available. "The place wasn't being used as much as George had hoped, so there was an arrangement where if you booked it, he would produce your album," Parker offers.

"Yeah, I think that's how it happened," Mogg says. "But it turned out to be a bit of a mismatch. And as for recording on a Caribbean island? Let's not go there." ➢


Phil Mogg with UFO co-headlining the 1980 Reading Festival.

UFO spent two weeks at AIR on Monserrat, an island where abject poverty nestled alongside monied privilege. Parker describes facilities there away from the recording studio as "primitive". AIR had its own generator, but elsewhere power cuts were frequent.

"We stayed in bungalows, but most people lived in huts with no windows," he recalls. "When the power went off, so did the air conditioning of course, and everything in the fridges would melt. However, there was a big swimming pool and a very nice golf course."

For reasons that nobody now remembers, UFO were allowed to bring along their wives and families to the island while they were recording, including a very pregnant Mrs Parker, resulting in what Mogg recalls as "a giant hippie movement". Throw in the local brew, a lethally strong brand of rum, and all manner of potential distractions raised their head. With a smirk, Mogg pretends to shake a cocktail: "Tonka. Pete. Me. The other two. Add gelignite and mix it up."

Maybe the album should have been called No Place To Rum?

"No, don't," he responds, offended by the abject nature of the pun. But, sure enough, during their stay moments of Tonka-esque (mis) behaviour ensued.

"One night, Paul had an extremely loud argument with his wife, who was Dutch, and her screaming echoed all around the island," Mogg reminisces. "It sounded as though someone was being murdered. The police were called out for the first time in five years. So we scored there."

Inside the studio, however, things couldn't have been much more different. Working in conjunction with his long-time recording engineer Geoff Emerick, George Martin operated to a strict timetable.

"You'd start recording at around eleven o'clock [am] and at six [pm] there'd be a break. A gentleman in a white jacket would bring him a gin and tonic, and we'd head into the main house for a meal," Pete Way told *Classic Rock* back in 2016. "It was all very colonial and civilised – though it didn't stay that way when Martin retired for the evening."

"A G&T on the veranda?" Mogg says. "We were more used to: 'Okay lads, the bar's open.'"

UFO and George Martin came from very different worlds. In 1994, not naming any band in particular, Martin (whose only other notable sojourn into the world of hard rock was Cheap Trick's *All Shook Up*, also released in 1980) told an interviewer: "I once had a flirtation with heavy metal, and I regretted it very much. It [the genre] didn't seem to have any sense."

"George was probably talking about us," Way admitted. "He wasn't used to hearing '*la-la-la*' as lyrics [until the very last minute]. But the thing about UFO is that we always came through with the goods. What he hadn't expected was that we were like a stone you just couldn't move – the way we worked was so long-established. George coped with the situation, but it puzzled him."

"I didn't view the process as some type of experiment for George in the way that Pete did," Mogg says now. "But he must have wondered what he was doing there. I don't think he was that into us, it was probably just another job, though it was obvious he enjoyed [the process of] recording."

"George was so easy to get along with," Parker agrees. "Geoff Emerick served as his ears, as even by that point George's hearing was going. Geoff was the guy that got the sounds."

"Were we in awe of them? I would say no, not at all," Mogg insists. "George was just a regular guy, a very nice chap. He had no airs or graces."

Track by track the album came together. Early on during the making of the album, *Young Blood,* an anthemic hard rocker written by Mogg and Way, was earmarked as a potential single. Sure enough, *Young Blood* – pressed on blood-red vinyl – took UFO into the UK Top 40. A YouTube clip shows the band performing the song on *Top Of The Pops* on January 10, 1980, all of them looking very serious and worryingly sober.

With hindsight, Mogg isn't especially fond of *Young Blood*. "I can see what we were trying to do with it, but I'm not especially keen," he admits.

On the album, the Chapman-written instrumental *Alpha Centauri* (used as an intro for the band's live show) led into the wonderful, fiery hard rock track *Lettin' Go*, while *This Fire Burns Tonight* would prove to be an inspired example of the UFO power ballad. It had been Chapman's idea to cover *Mystery Train*, a 1955 hit for Elvis Presley, although the plan almost collapsed due to confusion over the lyrics. In the end, somebody from Chrysalis in London played it to the band down the phone at the studio more than 4,000 miles away. "That's right. Nobody knew the words," Mogg says with a smirk, setting up his own punchline: "And we still don't."

His own contribution to the album completed, Andy Parker prepared to head home to England, leaving his bandmates at AIR to finish laying down the backing tracks. Fine-tuning was later undertaken at AIR's sister studio close to London's Oxford Street.

"For me and my wife, getting off the island was difficult because a hurricane was coming," he recalls. "We had a ten-seater plane, and the pilot kept looking at the sky and wondering whether or not it was safe [to take off]. In the end we were able to fly back to Puerto Rico, but it was a bit of a white-knuckle experience."

UFO were left flummoxed by the quietness of Martin's studio playbacks. "They sounded like a transistor radio," commented Pete Way. "After George had left on an evening, Paul Chapman and I would rachet up the volume to the point where I'm surprised the place still had a roof."

To this day, frustration simmers on over the final mix of *No Place To Run*.

"I felt like the album sounded a little too...," Mogg ruminates while searching for the right word. "I don't know. I like things to sound 'live'. Sometimes it does come across as a little polite, though overall I believe we made a very good album. And to be fair, I haven't heard the brand new remix."

"*No Place To Run* isn't a bad album, but personally I found George's mix a bit low-key," Way remembered. "All the same, it has some really good songs and is nicely put together."

Mogg's sole disappointment is that UFO didn't benefit from Martin's skill as an arranger. They would have to wait until next time around when the renowned Paul Buckmaster (David Bowie, Elton John, the Rolling Stones...)

Smiling for the camera in 1980: (l-r) Neil Carter, Pete Way, Phil Mogg, Paul Chapman, Andy Parker.

TOP: GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX. BOTTOM: RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

Check mates: Pete Way and Paul Chapman on UFO's Strangers In The Night UK tour, February 1979.

provided orchestral elements for *The Wild, The Willing And The Innocent* (which follows in the UFO remaster series).

"We had wanted to do an album with some strings," the vocalist explains. "Not 'flowery' strings, but something a little more macabre. That didn't happen. I suspect George had been briefed by Chrysalis – no, this is a rock album."

"Perhaps we missed an opportunity there," agreed Way.

Back in London, Aubrey Powell, better known as 'Po', of the celebrated sleeve design company Hypgnosis, brought the members of UFO together for a front-cover photoshoot at, of all places, a taxi rank outside King's Cross Station in London.

"We'd only just returned to the UK and it was freezing cold, so Parker wore a fur coat to keep himself warm," Mogg explains. "He's got a bottle of brandy hidden behind that petrol pump and he's sucking away on it, in between bouts of moaning at the temperature. If you look at the photo, Pete has reached across to tap me on the ankle with his foot, and out of the corner of his mouth he's saying: 'Fucking 'ell. Can you hear him moaning?'"

"Mogg has got it wrong again, the poor old fucker," Parker responds, with a fondness not apparent in his words. "I wasn't complaining about the cold, I really needed a pee and Po wouldn't let me go. That's what I was moaning about. I don't remember the bottle of brandy. But hey, what a great rock'n'roll photograph."

Released on January 11, 1980, *No Place To Run* was given a lukewarm reception by Geoff Barton, writing about it in *Sounds*. He praised its title track, but described the album as "curiously empty and unfulfilling". Nevertheless, Chrysalis threw their weight behind the release, making it available in several differently tinted covers. So the label would have been disappointed that it barely made the UK Top 100, scraping in at No.91.

However, doom-mongers would have been disappointed that the band's lengthy British tour sold so rapidly that a further two shows at London's prestigious Hammersmith Odeon were added to the existing pair, with androgynous UK glamsters Girl as special guests.

UFO went on to co-headline that year's Reading Festival. Then by the time they played a packed-to-the-rafters three-night run at London's Marquee club in November, Paul Raymond had left to join Michael Schenker and was succeeded by former Wild Horses man Neil Carter.

For a newly remastered and expanded version of *No Place To Run,* the vaults were raided for one of the performances from the Marquee (the final night of the three, November 16), which captures UFO at their blistering best.

"I've heard a bit of the recording and it sounds very lively – extremely energetic," Mogg states. "Returning to that place and its sticky carpets was like stepping back in time. The Marquee was part of our ride."

"I was blown away by the Marquee recording," Parker enthuses. "Neil [Carter] is still new but he sounds great. In one song – it might be *Lights Out* – we go into this unusual breakdown that sounds like [Led Zeppelin's] *Trampled Underfoot*."

Despite the reservations of some contemporary reviewers, the passing of time has treated *No Place To Run* extremely kindly, although, shockingly, it remains the only UFO studio album to be certified Silver in the UK for sales of more than 50,000 copies.

"Michael had gone, but the rollover of *Strangers In The Night* [which brought UFO another Silver certification] carried it along," Mogg reflects. "I'd say I like three-quarters of that album. Tonka played brilliantly on it."

Andy Parker attributes UFO's failure to scale the next level to two key factors: record company neglect and meddling, and not having credible management. "Had we found someone like Iron Maiden's Rod Smallwood, things would have turned out differently," he states. "And yes, Chrysalis *did* try to mould us in a slightly different direction. They had Blondie and Spandau Ballet who had been very successful, but it didn't really happen for us the same way. Gradually they lost a little interest in us, I think."

"Had we found someone like Iron Maiden's [manager] Rod Smallwood, things would have turned out differently."

Andy Parker

In the pub in Brighton, Mogg has just about finished his glass of lemonade, but before we bid farewell one final important question remains. Given that the debut from Moggs Motel was very well received, has he submitted planning permission for another?

"It's funny you should ask that, because there will certainly be a new wing of the Motel," he reveals proudly. "Yes, the workers are in and construction has started, so there will be some tasty new material. It'll take a while to complete, but things have elevated slightly from the last opening of the Motel.

"The best thing is that I'm having a bit of fun with it all," he adds in conclusion. "If possible I'd even like to do a gig or two – a summer festival [in 2026], maybe."

The Expanded 2025 Remaster of No Place To Run is available from Chrysalis on triple-vinyl and double-CD.

GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

The HOT LIST

THE ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

JESSE KORMAN/PRESS

Summer's very much over, days are getting shorter, the kids are back at school, Christmas is still a couple of months off (although the words 'End Of Year Issue' did just crop up at *Classic Rock* HQ, which shocked us all a bit). Happily it's also a bountiful season for new music releases. New faces, old veterans, returning favourites – they're all at it, and all represented in this month's Hot List.

We've got a French brother duo giving Deep Purple a run for their money, four girls from Austin meshing riffy metal and doom haze, welcome returns from Foxy Shazan and Tyler Bryant, an incisive, rocked-up riposte to heartbreak from Amanda Shires, and much more besides. Something for all your autumnal music needs, we like to think. Plus lots of them have tour dates coming up too, if you like what you hear and fancy some more.

Enjoy this month's selections, and for more of the best new music picks every week check out classicrockmagazine.com

Foxy Shazam *You Know My Name*

One of those big, sparkly, banger-heavy bands who ultimately remained far more cult-like than they should have done, Foxy Shazam have enjoyed something of a roll in recent times – snapping up movie roles and high-profile endorsements along the way. This gleaming duet with Corey Feldman, taken from their upcoming 10th album *Box Of Magic*, is the band's latest glitter-booted step. "The King of Pop came to me in a dream," frontman Eric Nally says, "and he told me that the essence of writing a true pop song lies within a simple nature; *123*, *ABC*, *Wheels On The Bus*, *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*, and we all know what happens to the spider... It's something we all have as kids, but it can get washed away if we don't remind ourselves."

foxyshazam.com

Liam St John
Trouble

Roots rocker Liam St John (based in Nashville but originally from the Pacific Northwest) might come over all currrntry with that voice, backdrop and music video full of vast, rugged American landscapes, but make no mistake, the guy rocks hard on the muscular yet characterful *Trouble*. If The Cadillac Three and Royal Blood got together for a heavy jam session after a steak dinner and some strong coffee, they might have cooked up something like this. Like the taste of that? We sure as hell do. Liam's debut album, *Man Of The North*, is out now.
liamstjohn.com

Laura Cox *No Need To Try Harder*

Kicking off with some brilliantly dirty, rollicking slide guitar, the standout track from French guitarist/singer Laura Cox's new album *Trouble Coming* positions her as a serious contender in contemporary rock'n'roll – several steps on from her beginnings as a viral YouTube star posting bluesy classic rock covers, most of which leaned into her instrumental prowess rather than her singing chops. The moody but up-tempo *No Need To Try Harder* sees her finding her mojo as a songwriter, fusing a big chorus to classy rock licks.
lauracoxmusic.com

Moundrag *The Caveman*

This heavy-psych brother duo from France whip up a deliciously Deep Purple-esque storm (they opened for Purple in France last year) on this groovy, organ-whirling highlight from their new album *Deux*, which comes out this month. Sumptuous yet fiery, blending "fantasy, sci-fi and Celtic mythology into lyrics that defy archaic norms", *The Caveman* exudes that classic 70s rock spirit in a way that feels energised and exciting and 'now'. Oh, and they do it all with just vocals, drums and organ. Impressive.
moundrag.bandcamp.com/music

MOUNDRAG: JEAN-ADRIEN MORANDEAU/PRESS; LAURA COX: LI RODA-GIL; LIAM ST JOHN: GRAHAM FIELDER/PRESS

Amanda Shires
Piece Of Mind

Singer, songwriter and fiddle player Amanda Shires turns the pain of her divorce (from singer-songwriter Jason Isbell) into a searing, brilliantly articulated roots-laced rock banger with *Piece Of Mind*.

"This one came when I was finally done being polite about pain," Shires explains. "I wrote this song because I never got closure. *Piece Of Mind* became the place I said everything I didn't get to say. Writing it gave me an ending. Not tidy. Not bitter. Just mine."

Get immersed in this and more on her full, emotionally raw but quietly incendiary new album, *Nobody's Girl*.

amandashiresmusic.com

Die Spitz
Throw Yourself To The Sword

This Austin quartet are one of the buzziest new names in rock'n'roll right now, and happily there's real substance to back up the hype. Switching styles and instruments from song to song, their debut album *Something To Consume* is fearlessly varied, hopping from classic heavy metal through grunge, pop, shoegaze and more – of which the deliciously riffy beef and doom-laced ambiance of *Throw Yourself To The Sword* is our favourite. Together it all makes a weird kind of sense. They originally got together after watching Mötley Crüe biopic *The Dirt* and deciding they needed to start their own band. Now that energy shines through their chops to infectious effect – the sound of a naturally charismatic group of friends, still discovering things and having a blast in the process.

diespitz.com

AMANDA SHIRES: BRETT WARREN/PRESS; DIE SPITZ: POONEH GHANA/PRESS

The Vintage Caravan
Philosopher

Long-serving Icelandic power trio The Vintage Caravan are joined by Opeth overlord Mikael Åkerfeldt on this atmospheric, commanding kick-off track from their new album *Portals*. Like the rest of the record, it's a more layered, intriguing affair than initially meets the eye (or rather, ear). The dreamy, acoustic opening minute or so gives off a feeling of Porcupine Tree's classic *Trains*, but before long they're striding into meaty, headbanger rock'n'roll, spiced beautifully by Åkerfeldt's alluring croon (all lush velvet with traces of venom) and a smoke-wreathed quality that never really leaves.
thevintagecaravan.eu

Tyler Bryant *Falling Up*

After years of band life, Tyler Bryant has parked the 'And The Shakedown' portion of his moniker and flown solo. With this creative independence, a new studio freshly built and his first child recently born (with musician wife Rebecca Lovell, one half of rootsy sister duo Larkin Poe), this two-minute blues rocker has the air of something that just burst out of him. It's like hearing Freddie King's *Going Down* with Bryant's youthful but heavy, dirty swagger driving it forward. "It's a reckless moment captured on tape," he says. "That's the kinda thing I grew up on."
tylerbryantmusic.com

And keep an ear out for... A Thousand Horses

We saw these countrified Nashvillians at their first UK show in six years not too long ago, and realised we'd forgotten how many grade-A bangers they have up their sleeves. Tune after tune, banger after banger, they kept knocking them out at a rate that surprised and delighted us.

But now, with a few years, the exit of a long-term bandmate and some testing life experiences behind them, they're shaking things up a bit. Specifically, on their brooding yet driving latest single *Voices* they've ditched the Stetsons in favour of a sound that says 'southern Soundgarden via Green Day's *Boulevard Of Broken Dreams*'. Which we're really quite partial to.

"Rock'n'roll has always been at the core of our sound and with this next album we are diving all the way in," guitarist Bill Satcher says. "*Voices* is the first taste of what's to come, the full-throttle ATH rock album that's been sleeping in our souls all along."
athousandhorses.com

VINTAGE CARAVAN: STEFAN ARI STEFANSSON/PRESS; A THOUSAND HORSES: MATTHEW PASKERT/PRESS; TYLER BRYANT: MICHAEL STRICKLIN/PRESS

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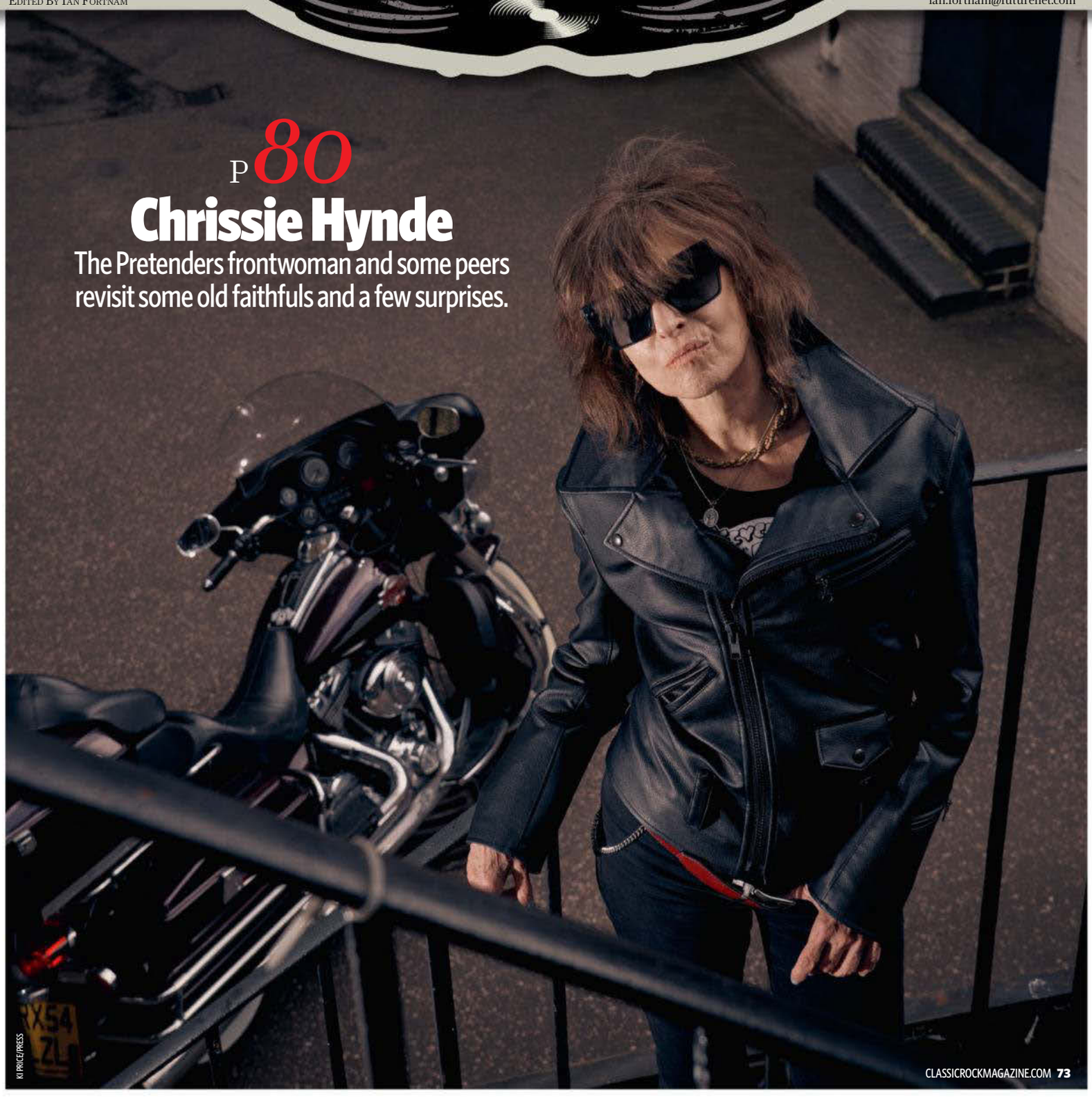
Chrissie Hynde

The Pretenders frontwoman and some peers revisit some old faithfuls and a few surprises.



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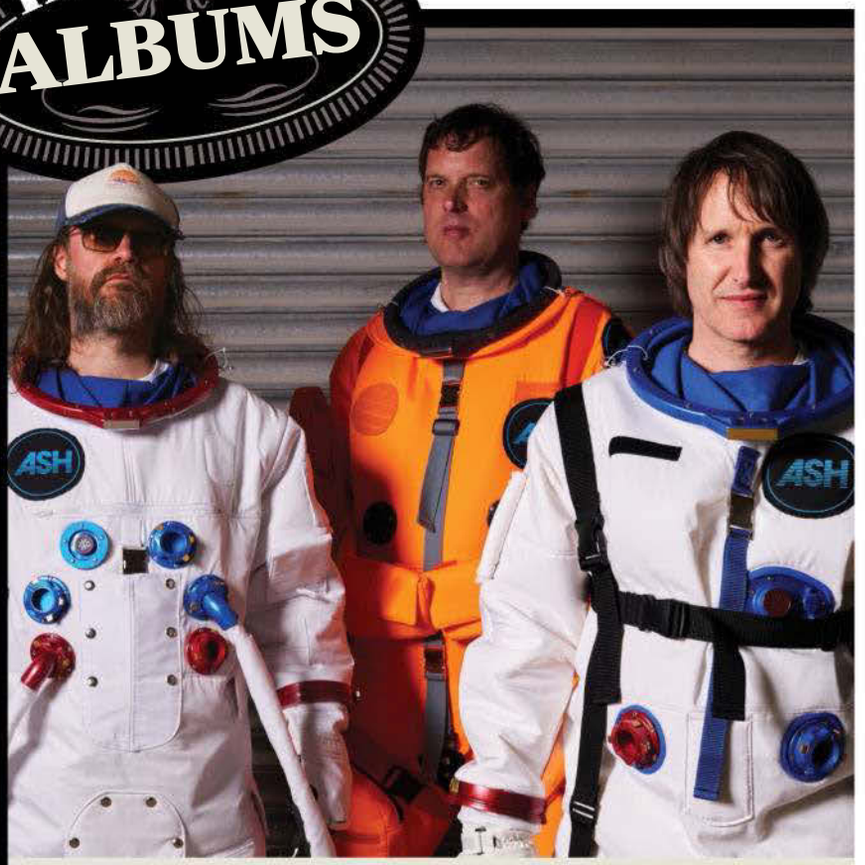


Ash

Ad Astra *FIERCE PANDA*

Northern Irish punk-pop trio blast off with a wider perspective of sound and vision.

That Ash open this space-themed ninth album with a lark-about synth-rock take on *Also Sprach Zarathustra* is more fitting than they probably know. Just when Northern Ireland's premier punk-pop trio should be withering their way through their third decade together, by some sci-fi space-odyssey magic they sound reborn on each new album. Since 2018's *Islands* at least, they've been on a tear of futuristic rock brilliance and Brit-Weezer ballast. You'd call it a revitalisation if they'd ever actually lost any of the youthful vigour of *1977*. When an excitable young woman introduces the hook-laden *Hallion* by hyping Ash like they're the next big thing, they don't disappoint.

Prone to perking up the personal, with *Ad Astra* Ash take a far broader life-view. The title track is a literal planetary escape: '*Take me up to the stars, we will learn who we are, see the Earth from above*,' Tim Wheeler sings to warp-speed alt.rock, and from this wider angle they take in a troubling modern world.

Dehumanise, their very own *My Name Is Jonas* with its tinkling verses and hammering chorus, decries the othering effect of war, religion and social media. *Fun People* interrupts its upbeat, globe-trotting electro-glam for a cheerleader chant about the short attention spans, paranoias and main character syndromes of the new, very online generation.

Some of the album's best moments come when Wheeler turns the lens on himself – pining for a long-gone lover on gorgeous chamber ballad *My Favourite Ghost*, or acting the romantic phantom himself on *Ghosting*. But there is social commentary at work, albeit nothing that would have bothered the sound-desk censors of the Victorious festival.

There's also a widening of their sonic scope, taking in broader influences from The Smiths (*Which One Do You Want* could be a New York-set *Bigmouth Strikes Again*), The Specials (*Jump In The Line* is a ska-punk conga tune right down to Wheeler's cry of '*Okay, I believe you!*') and Blur – here's Blur's Graham Coxon himself adding a lascivious drawl to *Fun People*, echoing the melodies of the title track and, without actually playing on the track, lending the spirit of his *Coffee + TV* to *Ghosting*.

And so with *Ad Astra* Ash are reborn again: older, wiser, but sounding not a wrinkle of it.

Mark Beaumont

Cardiacs

LSD *THE ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN*

Tim Smith's final statement.

Late, great Cardiacs founder Tim Smith's magnum opus was originally planned for release in 2008, but his well-publicised health problems precluded its completion. Bassist Jim has overseen its triumphant rebirth in the years since his brother's passing in 2020, and it is a thing of cracked, euphoric beauty from start to finish.

Dense with delirious detail and bursting with magical melodies and moments of artful insanity, the album shines a bright light on Smith's genius. From the previously released *Ditzy Scene* and bolshy comeback single *Woodeneye* to the sparkling intricacy of epics *Busty Beez, Skating* and sublime closing elegy *Pet Fezant* (written by Tim's partner Emily Jones), every facet of Cardiacs' unique psychedelic prog-punk majesty can be found here, all spectacular and radiant with love. Let joy be unconfined: the final Cardiacs album is finally with us, and it is a wonderful, life-affirming masterpiece.

Dom Lawson

DarWin

Distorted Mirror

OOS/PHANTOM RECORDINGS

Slick and powerful prog showcase.

The words 'prog' and 'supergroup' were just made for each other, a sweet combo guaranteed to strike joy into the hearts of those who value elevated musical prowess.

DarWin (guitar), Simon Phillips (drums), Matt Bissonette (vocals), Mohini Dey (bass) and Greg Howe (guitars), plus a bunch of guest musical whizzes, play for all they're worth on this follow-up to 2024's *Five Steps On The Sun*. From opener *Rising Distortion* to closer *Winter Fare*, the flow is beautifully paced and meanders impeccably from wanton guitar and keyboard flourishes to soaring choruses without breaking into a sweat. The temptation must be to stretch ideas beyond their natural length, but, to their credit the band keep things relatively concise and direct, with nothing breaking the seven-minute mark. *33rd Century Man* and *Glow* among the scintillating highlights.

Complex without losing sight of the songs, *Loophole* is satisfyingly addictive.

Essi Berelian

Pavlov's Dog

Wanderlust *RUF*

First album in more than a decade from esteemed 70s prog rockers.

America's Pavlov's Dog first impacted with 1973's *Pampered Menial*, an idiosyncratic take on the prog idiom. Critical acclaim for them was never matched by commercial success, and many previous members have not just departed the band but also this earth. However, they abide, fronted by founder member and vocalist David Surkamp.

Anyway There's Snow is typical in its wistful weave of acoustic piano, guitar, violin and vulnerable lyrics. *Another Blood Moon* has the air of a nocturnal country serenade, tinged with sadness – '*Don't go down by the river any more.*' *Collingwood Hotel* bears faint intimations of mid-70s Bob Dylan circa *Desire*, *Calling Sigfried* is jazz inflected, cumulatively charismatic, and *I Wait For You* showcases Surkamp's peculiarly tremulous vocal.

Wanderlust is unlikely to win Pavlov's Dog a great many new fans, but it will greatly please the existing faithful.

David Stubbs

Kittie

Spit XXV *SUMERIAN*

Canadian nu-metal misfits give vintage tracks a fresh shot of rage.

From Deftones to System Of A Down, the best nu metal bands never wanted to be nu metal bands. The same can be said of Kittie. Despite their 2000 debut *Spit* making singer/guitarist Morgan Lander one of the genre's few female figureheads, the Canadian band quickly ditched the scene in favour of thrash and death metal.

So it's somewhat surprising that they've re-recorded four tracks from their first album to mark its 25th anniversary, and done so with original producer Garth Richardson behind the

ANDY WILLSHER/PRESS

desk. However, *Spit XXV* is no throwback, eschewing nostalgia and instead dragging old material in line with the band's current sound. Although *Brackish* still seems like something of a Coal Chamber freak-out, the rest of the tracks are less Korn, more Shadows Fall. The title track is an unchained, screaming behemoth, while *Do You Think I'm A Whore?* is barely recognisable but timelessly heavy.

Matt Mills

Sparks

Madder! EP *TRANSGRESSIVE*

The Mael brothers keep on getting even.

Around the time of their startling breakthrough with *Kimono My House*, few would have predicted that art-pop provocateurs Sparks would have their highest-charting (UK) album half a century later. But just as their music defies the norm, so does their career.

That album, *Mad!*, their twenty-eighth, carries on rage-laughing with the arrival of an all-new four-track companion piece. They just can't stop themselves. *Porcupine* is a thumping mix of silliness and surrealism that pretty much captures the essence of Sparks. Repetition is used as a driving device, archness dances with mania, and a creature that 'might test your views about diversity to the nth degree' is extolled. *Fantasize* examines obsession. *Mess Up* does that Sparks trick of biting the neck of one idea till it bleeds new colours. The best track, *They*, slows down to allow Russell's mature-years voice to resonate.

"They were satisfied", it declares. They should be.

Chris Roberts

Goo Goo Dolls

Summer Anthem *WARNER*

More than a single, less than an album.

As they hurtle to the 40th anniversary of Goo Goo Dolls' self-titled debut, New York state's Johnny Rzeznik and Robby Takac are still basking in the inclusion of *Iris* on 2024's *Deadpool & Wolverine* soundtrack and the new, younger audience it brought.

Seizing the moment, albeit belatedly after road-testing these songs, they've responded with this seven-track EP. Less experimental and more radio-friendly than 2022's *Chaos In Bloom*, it's an appositely titled collection of galloping, heroic summery anthems. The biggest is the closing *Not Goodbye (Close My Eyes)*, but there's also the *Iris*-esque ballad *Run All Night*, while the stentorian *Such A Mystery* finds Rzeznik rasping verses around an almost Buzzcocks-ish chorus.

More than a decade after their last US Top 10 album, their expanding fan base for whom *Iris* is a relatively recent development has enabled them to maintain their arena-level status. There's nothing here to hasten anyone's decline.

John Aizlewood

The Rods

Wild Dogs Unchained

MASSACRE

Still rabid after all these years.

The Rods are arguably the US's first true metal band (they'll have to wrestle Riot for that one). Their frontman Dave 'The Rock' Feinstein is Ronnie Dio's cousin, and played with him in Elf. Their drummer Carl Canedy was NY's go-to metal producer during the genre's salad days. They are responsible for the best/worst album cover of 1984 (look it up), and they have consistently delivered raw, raunchy, heavy metal rock'n'roll for more than 40 years. And they've done all that while looking like hungover plumbers from New Jersey. The Rods are true rockers and this album, a mash-up of newies and "reimagined" classics from their seminal 1982 *Wild Dogs* album, is a bona fide classic of iron and steel.

Ronnie Dio's legacy looms large over the proceedings, from the epic fantasy of *Eyes Of A Dreamer* to the keyboards-drenched Rainbow pastiche *Mirror Mirror*, but there's plenty for denim-clad dirt-rockers like yours cruelly, from the savage riffola of *Rock N' Roll Fever* to the reduced road-rat belter *Hurricane* and the snarling Thin Lizzy-esque fist-raiser *Make Me A Believer*. Why these guys aren't the American Judas Priest, I'll never know.

Sleazegrinder

Leap

Entropy *SELF-RELEASED*

British alt.rockers have all the ingredients to cross over.

That Leap have released their debut album – and done so independently – is a triumph in itself. Frontman Jack Scott has endured much in recent years. An extended manic episode led to him being sectioned and incarcerated for months, and that's the tip of the iceberg.

Entropy is an even bigger triumph. Far from a mopey recovery record, it's assured and chameleonic, interpolating rock'n'roll street-smarts in indie-pop sheen. *Exit Signs* is a highlight, where the guitars are all about the push and the pull, either embellishing with vibrant twangs or driving its catchy chorus forward. *I Was Never There* is an indifferent, disco-ish track, while *The Downfall* employs the sort of angsty, widescreen bluster that's made Bring Me The Horizon one of the biggest bands in the world. With some momentum, Leap could have a real go at that themselves.

Chris Lord

The Lemonheads

Love Chant *FIRE*

First album in 20 years is up there with their best.

Stories have circulated in recent years about Lemonheads frontman Evan Dando's erratic behaviour on stage – audiences never quite knowing whether he'll deliver another heartbreaking cover or phone a family member mid-set. At times it has seemed as if he were intent on becoming a latter-day Gram Parsons or Dan Treacy – as famous for the chaos as for the music. He's fully aware of this, too – his new autobiography is pointedly titled *Rumours Of My Demise*.

Fortunately, Dando has drawn as much from Parsons's and Treacy's musical brilliance as from their excesses. *Love Chant*, The Lemonheads' first studio album in nearly two decades, is a remarkable return to form, standing comfortably alongside their 90s peak, 1993's *Come On Feel The Lemonheads*. It's fun, frantic, and full of classic Lemonheads hooks, self-deprecating refrains, and perfectly crafted mini-operas in the style of Jimmy Webb.

Dando's voice has deepened with age, gaining a new resonance. On the Tom Morgan co-written *Deep End* and the bittersweet rocker *In The Margin* his delivery is so rich it's almost knee-buckling.

What exactly is a 'classic Lemonheads lick'? It's the irresistible refrain of *Cell Phone Blues* that lodges in your head permanently; it's the woozy, celebratory sway of *Be In*; it's the sweet spot where grunge collides with country, punk fuses with folk psychedelia, and the seams never show. Imagine Dinosaur Jr raised on The Archies, or your dream mid-70s country-rock band. Just the first 30 seconds of the gorgeous *Togetherness Is All I'm After* – a standout featuring what can only be a J Mascis guitar solo beneath Dando's stunningly expressive vocals – alone justify this album's existence. '*Baby, don't blow it*,' Dando pleads at its close.

Morgan and Mascis are just two of many collaborators here. Juliana Hatfield and John Strohm (co-writer of *Togetherness*) rejoin their Boston compatriot from Blake Babies days. Adam Green of Moldy Peaches co-wrote the riotous, riff-packed *Wild Thing*, tipping its hat to The Troggs while nodding to Lemonheads fan favourite *Rick James Style*. Meanwhile, Nick Saloman of the Bevis Frond contributes to *Roky*, a laid-back psych tribute to 13th Floor Elevators visionary Roky Erickson.

Love Chant is a wonderful and surprisingly vital return to the fray.

Everett True

GARETH JONES/PRESS

Michael Schenker Group

Don't Sell Your Soul *EARMUSIC*

Guitar hero follows his re-imagined UFO favourites with a set of his own new material.

Despite seemingly having played with, and reputedly fallen out with, an illustrious list of hard rock's best and brightest since he first left his brother in the nascent Scorpions to join UFO – the band with whom he and his trademark Flying V first made their mark of course – Michael Schenker retains plentiful reserves of affection among his fellow metalheads. Last year's album with the re-formed Michael Schenker Group, *My Years With UFO*, featured guest spots from Axl Rose, Slash, Biff Byford, Joey Tempest, Dee Snider and Carmine Appice, among others, as he revisited songs from his several stints with the venerable British rock institution.

Schenker's latest album, *Don't Sell Your Soul*, has been introduced as the second in a trilogy of albums for his new label earMUSIC. But with the best will in the world, following those UFO songs with this collection of his own new compositions was always going to invite unfavourable comparisons. Nonetheless, the 11 tracks here give Schenker fans what they want, not least on the regular occasions (okay, every track) where the guitarist lets rip on six strings.

In keeping with MSG's modus operandi, though, these are first and foremost songs rather than Schenker showcases, even if it would be difficult to make out that all of them will live long in the memory. The five-minute title track thunders out of the speakers, wind in its hair, yet the sum total of its wisdom seems to be '*Don't sell your soul... can't have it all*', with little mention of what fearsome forces might be up for buying it. But then amid the galloping bluster of *Surrender* and the synth-pulsing prowl of *Janey The Fox* we're left feeling little has really left its mark.

Into The Storm fares better, even as it paints more vague pictures of an epic conflict: '*Somewhere between hell and the sky... those that will live, and those that will die, finally standing as one.*' But the sense of mounting hysteria in the chorus pulls it through with strong hints of Dio-era Rainbow. Then there's the trump card of Schenker's reliably arresting guitar playing. That helps lift the chuggingly infectious pop-rocker *I Can't Stand Waiting* to a place where it would surely have been fit for a 1988 edition of *Headbanger's Ball*, and he's equally ready to play exhilarating squall storms on the propulsive *Sign Of The Times* and the lascivious *It's You*.

More than 50 years since a teenager from Hanover first turned heads, those fingers can still do some serious talking.

Johnny Sharp

Sabaton

Legends *BETTER NOISE*

Historical icons get the heavy metal treatment they never knew they needed.

There are few things Euro-metal action men Sabaton are scared of, but restraint is one of them. These camo-clad Swedes have built a career on retelling stories of war and heroism with the subtlety of Manowar presenting an O Level History lesson, at a volume that could out-boom the guns of Navarone.

Their eleventh album focuses on historical figures who could legitimately include the word 'legend' on their dating profiles, from Napoleon to Julius Caesar. Such an epic concept deserves music to match, and Sabaton deliver. *Templars*, about the medieval religious order, is a five-minute heavy metal call-to-arms that finds singer Joakim Brodén – a man whose resonant bellow makes Brian Blessed sound like a Jane Austen heroine having an attack of the vapours – doing battle with a 48-piece choir and winning, while the thunderous *Maid Of Steel* turns Joan Of Arc into a headbanging metal martyr.

Whether *Legends* is clever is debatable, but it's outrageously big, and Sabaton will fight anybody who says otherwise.

Dave Everley

Circle 60

Gods Of Dimension *OCTOPHONIC*

Second from former Senseless Things' psych-tinged romp.

Since Senseless Things split in 1995, their rhythm section of Cass Browne and Morgan Nicholls have dipped their fingers in a variety of pies, including dance-rock with Delakota alongside Des Murphy in the late 90s, working with Gorillaz for much of the 2000s, and in Browne's case even helping chamber-pop experimentalists Penguin Café reinvent themselves. So reuniting with Murphy as Circle 60 to make psych-pop was business as (un)usual on 2019's *Sawnoff Shotgold*.

This follow-up is equally assured. The *Revolver*-era Beatles tropes, from melodic bass trills to bright harmonies, are plentiful on *The Sonic Invisible* and *Upside Down Mountain Cloud*, and their love of adrenalised punk-pop is never far from the surface, most noticeably in the scratchy charm of *She Got Bored* and the turbo-charged beat-pop of *Martian Surprise*. Quirky samples of film dialogue add more flashes of Technicolor to a joyful trip.

Johnny Sharp

Vowws

I'll Fill Your House With An Army *OUT OF LINE MUSIC*

Well-connected LA scenesters have a spooky do with their latest release.

From Australia, but very much a product of their adopted hometown Los Angeles, self-proclaimed "death pop" duo Vowws are one of those bands that famous people love to love. In the past they've collaborated with Gary Numan and Chino Moreno, and they wooed the style set with a live score for a Comme Des Garçons Men's Fashion Week catwalk.

For this album, singer/keyboard player Rizz and singer/guitarist Matt James have brought in Josh Freese from A Perfect Circle and Munky from Korn for highlight *Shudder*, a moody slab of industrial electronica that will be catnip to kids who grew up on *The Crow*. Halloween-hued and with a bluster and sheen that harks back to the 80s, they're at their best when they're building up the downbeat fury or playing with dark, Depeche Mode-flecked pop, as on *Silhouette*. There is, though, a sense of them running out of steam after the halfway mark, the spooky atmosphere remaining in spades but the drama dissipating along with the listener's attention.

Emma Johnston

Liam St. John

Man Of The North *BIG LOUD ROCK*

Magnetic northerner.

Roots troubadour Liam St. John says his autobiographical debut *Man Of The North* was "a lifetime in the making". Despite his relative youth, it's been a lifetime of hardships and hard living, detailed in the confessional, cathartic lyrics. Although his breakthrough may have been via

ROSS HALFIN/PRESS

the US version of *The Voice*, it came after dues paid in dive bars, and his raw, impassioned vocals bear the imprint of formative influences Etta James and Ray Charles.

Just as Amy Winehouse modernised vintage soul and R&B elements, St. John offers a contemporary distillation of blues, folk, and country that's frequently captivating. The volume gets cranked for Zep-style rockers (*Trouble, Falling In Love*), then eases off for the exuberant bluegrass of *Greyhound Bus Blues* and balmy slow-roller *Devil In Disguise*, marking out St. John as a versatile vocalist and convincing songwriter.

Rich Davenport.

Brandi Carlile

Returning To Myself

ISLAND/EMI

Singer-songwriter's eighth album full of beautiful wonder and woe.

It's been four years since Brandi Carlile's seismic solo album *In These Silent Days*, which garnered her three Grammys. While her reputation as a singer-songwriter is formidable, she'll be recognisable to most listeners as Elton John's partner on this year's wonderful *Who Believes In Angels?*. But Carlile goes much further back than that, with records filled with soul, reflection and a sublime country twang.

Part poet ('*Is there some freewheeling watcher, shooting marbles in the sky?/Holding your years between their fingers, watching it burn till the fire dies*'), part performer (it's little wonder that Joni Mitchell chose to come out of retirement to play with Carlile), this is glorious stuff: the punchy, thin-lipped *Church & State*; the affecting wonderfully layered harmonies of *A Woman Oversees;* the slowly uncoiling storytelling bound up in the lingering *A Long Goodbye*.

Philip Wilding

The Len Price 3

Misty Medway Magick

WICKED COOL

Garage rock revivalists cast their spells once more.

For the Len Price 3, musical development is the last thing that's needed. Indeed, so entrenched are they in the overheated valve-amp noise of The Who at their mid-60s peak, the scuzziness of the Pretty Things and the melodic sensibilities of the Fab Four, that it's intriguing to see just how far they can go using the same palette they've painted with for almost 20 years.

Yet push further they do. Among the two-minute fuzz grenades that this album consistently lobs is the dreamy *The Luckiest Guy Alive*, an achingly melodic gem that just cracks the three-and-a-half-minute mark. Any thoughts that this may be venturing into prog territory (as if!) are soon dispelled by the crash-bang-wallop of *Arthur's Whirlwind, Haw Haw's Daughter*'s hammered-on riffs and the terrace-chanting *If I Could Cheer You Up*. Terrific fun from start to finish.

Julian Marszalek

Wino

Create Or Die *RIPPLE MUSIC*

Prolific Rockville rocker reaffirms his lifer philosophy.

For obvious reasons, the recent rock news cycle has centred on Black Sabbath and their incomparable influence, but America has had more than a hand in codifying some of our favourite sounds.

Take Scott Weinrich, who many consider a godfather of doom, still active with his decades-old heavy bands The Obsessed and Saint Vitus. *Create Or Die* is a suitably blunt title for the latest in the metal lifer's line of solo albums, which have often been more diverse. *New Terms* emphasises that point with banjos and introspective Irish folk elements. *Carolina Fox* has that trademark Sabbath-style trudge, punctuated by Wino's weathered baritone. *Lost Souls Fly* projects shades of Robin Trower's *Bridge Of Sighs*, with added stoner-rock finale. It's everything you'd want from a Wino album in 2025: beefy doom rock, well-travelled, southern twangs and plenty of new ideas.

Chris Lord

Kyle Hollingsworth

All We Are *SCI FIDELITY*

Kicking out the jams.

Three decades with the genre-bending jam band String Cheese Incident have taught keyboard player Kyle Hollingsworth to be alert and adaptable. These are traits he has carried over into his solo albums, of which this is the fifth. The main difference is that instead of focusing on being a team player he can develop his own bright, buoyant style that reflects his own broad interests.

The opening track is an unconcealed nod to one of his favourite bands, Death Cab For Cutie, while *Carnival* is about life on the road with String Cheese Incident. *Lost In The Mirror* is an observation on his teenage daughter's growing sense of image, and *Colorado* is an anthem for the scenic pleasures of his adopted home state. Hollingsworth's keyboards are prominent but not dominant, with many of the songs being guitar-driven, suggesting a relaxed confidence without the need to impose himself.

Hugh Fielder

Ewan Currie

Strange Vacation *RIGHT ON*

Lead Sheepdog temporarily leaves flock for new pastures.

Strange . Vacation is Ewan Currie's fourth album away from The Sheepdogs, following 2019's solo *Out Of My Mind* and two albums as Bros (rhymes with 'toes' not 'toss') with brother Shamus. It's the best of the four, and frequently uplifting in the way that the best downbeat music can be, perhaps *because* it's so calm and unhurried.

Currie's contemplative songs are seasoned with a spoonful of JJ Cale, a dusting of Jeff Lynne and a shake of Brian Wilson, with hints of Fleetwood Mac and Judee Sill. Throughout, the sun is dappled, the grooves late-night, the vistas dreamlike, and only the wonky electronica on *King Leopold's Ghost* briefly threatens to disturb the reverie.

Lovely.

Fraser Lewry

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Gwyn Ashton: knuckle sandwiches spiced with soul, R&B and gospel.

Gwyn Ashton

Grease Bucket *SELF-RELEASED*

However big he gets – and by this point the word has spread far beyond the South Australia circuit where he earned his spurs – Gwyn Ashton still comes up with the kind of hooks that would turn heads (or dissuade bottlers) in a roughneck watering hole.

Opening with *Something That The Cat Dragged In* – a groove so filthy you'll want to wipe down your speakers afterwards – *Grease Bucket* is full of them. *Evil Child* rattles along like a malevolent *Smokestack Lightning*. *Howlin' At The Moon* is all whispered threats and hammer-fingered pluck. *When The Well Runs Dry* packs a guitar tone like a glitching nuclear reactor, Ashton spitting a diss-track diatribe that would make gangster rappers blanch (*'There ain't no way this test of life you're gonna pass/unless you decide to pull your head out of your ass'*).

Once he has our attention, though, Ashton shows his sophistication. These knuckle sandwiches are spiced with soul, R&B and gospel (backing vocalist Andrea Dawson is a gale-force presence), and decorated with a slide-guitar touch up there with the best in the game.

Jack J Hutchinson

Battle Scars *SELF-RELEASED*

Jack J Hutchinson rolled tape on his recent *Battles* tour, and this live album taken from it shows his gift for turning a club show into a shared primal scream. Headbangers like *Days Are Gone* offer one kind of catharsis, while *I Will Follow You* is genuinely spiritual, the guitarist/singer/bandleader's ode to his Alzheimer's-stricken father chiming with the audience.

Holly Golightly

Look Like Trouble

DAMAGED GOODS

There's an aftertaste here of the crash-bang-wallop band that made Holly Golightly's name (all-girl garage-rockers Thee Headcoatees). But her solo career since 1995 has bigger ideas, and these new songs, her first in seven years, are lush and cinematic, their atmosphere pitched somewhere between courtship dance and Mexican standoff.

Emma King

Pocketful Of Sun

GREAT BRITISH SONGWRITING CO

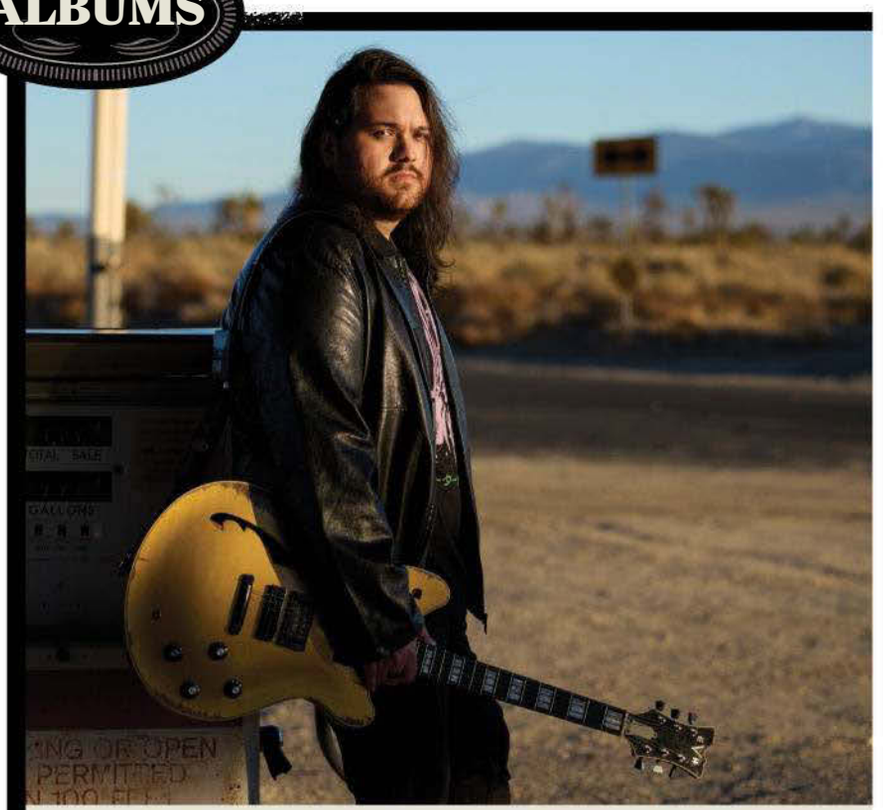
In a world of fakery, real life patently underpins the new songs from Emma King, whose non-verbal daughter inspired an album calling for empathy and kindness. Challenges are acknowledged, but this collection is gloriously hooky and instantly uplifting – music to make you strip the dead wood of your mindset and live a little better.

Laura Evans

Out Of The Dark *SELF-RELEASED*

In 2022, Laura Evans impressed with the soul-bluesy *State Of Mind*, and this follow-up is stronger still. Here, she teams up with co-writer/producer Ian Barter to deliver a set where the intimate blues ballads unfold like confessionals, but you're never too far from a scuffed-up southern rock chorus (to rattle your speakers, try *Heartbreaker* or *Hear Me Out*).

PRESS



Mammoth

The End *BMG*

Third dynamic, highly polished album from the former wunderkind.

It still comes as something of a surprise to realise that Wolfgang Van Halen is approaching his mid-thirties. It seems like only yesterday that the child prodigy was touring as the bassist with Van Halen at the tender age of 16, making a record, *A Different Kind Of Truth*, with the band as he approached his twenties, and going on to become a vital component of the turbocharged group Tremonti at 22. It's a remarkable résumé. Admittedly the family genes and reputation helped, but he's been standing on his own two feet since his 2021 album *Mammoth WVH*, which reportedly he started working on at the tail end of 2013's *A Different Kind Of Truth* tour. He's been making up for lost time ever since.

Three albums in four years. And while he keeps his live band on the road for months at a time, everything else is Wolfgang Van Halen: he writes all the songs, sings every part, and plays every instrument on the records himself, usually starting to build the song from the drums up. That's still his favourite instrument, and the first one he learned to play when he was nine. Not with the help of his uncle, Van Halen drummer Alex, but learning from father Eddie, who taught him to play the drum parts for *Highway To Hell* on a coffee table and a pile of magazines.

Later he worked away for weeks at a time in his father's band's home from home, the 5150 studio. Maybe there's something in Malcolm Gladwell's so called '10,000-hour rule' – that it takes approximately 10,000 hours of deliberate practice to achieve mastery in any skill. Listening to *The End*, you get the feeling Wolfgang's been putting the time in.

Case in point is the title track (with its wonderfully unhinged video homage to vampire flick *From Dusk Till Dawn*, original director Robert Rodriguez returning to help recreate that world), which crashes in like a daunting mix of classic Van Halen and 80s Rush, before revealing some sublime pop notes and a guitar solo that could turn a truck over. (Just for good measure, and possibly to prove that he is a solo star, he also feeds his band to the marauding vampires.) Just great too is the thrumming *All In Good Time*, a country-like lament bolted on to a hard rock refrain. The thundering riff of *I Really Wanna* underlies a cajoling, pointed lyric that is somehow playful but not without bite, while the rattling *Selfish* has similar snark, a driving melody propelling the song along, Wolfgang's white knuckles on the wheel, the sound of redemption or revenge ringing in his ears.

The End, then, is anything but. As the old adage goes, three's a charm, truly.

Philip Wilding

Atomic Rooster

Circle The Sun *CHERRY RED*

A new dawn.

For their first album since 1983's *Headline News*, Atomic Rooster have flipped back the calendar to 1970, the year of their classic second album *Death Walks Behind You*. Unsurprisingly, the line-up has seen a multitude of chops and changes, with keyboard player and founder member Vincent Crane and original drummer Carl Palmer's replacement Paul Hammond passing away in 1989 and 1992 respectively. The current line-up, which came together in 2016, is led by guitarist Steve Bolton, aka Boltz, who first joined in 1971, who shares vocal duties with keyboard player Adrian Gautrey, who replaced Pete French who left last year for Leaf Hound.

Accordingly, this clutch of songs abounds with scarifying swirls and squawks of horror-show Hammond, thundering riffs and operatic shrieking, used to particularly fine effect on *Follow Me* and *Rebel Devil*. *Last Night* is almost a pastiche of the original Atomic Rooster's 1970 hit *Tomorrow Night*, but sincerity helps them to steer clear of parody.

French's departure will have left a gap, but this storming set will propel the Rooster through another festival season. After 42 years, finally they have something to crow about.

Claudia Elliott

Idlewild

Idlewild *V2*

Scottish quintet beat the dreaded 'tenth album syndrome' with ease.

Despite a brace of decent albums (*100 Broken Windows* and *Warnings/Promises*) and a clutch of anthemic singles (one being *You Held The World In Your Arms Tonight*), Scottish alt.rockers Idlewild never quite made it to the upper reaches of indie's big league. And while that is unlikely to change, the quintet prove on this, their tenth album and first in six years, that they still possess the ability to produce solid work.

The lovely *Writers In The Present Time* pulls a beautiful twist as it blends air-punching and soaring music against lachrymose concerns ('*I can't play a part in who your are*,' sings Roddy Woomble), while *Like I Had Before* is one of the best songs that New Order never wrote. Lead off single *Stay Out Of Place* occupies a mournful hinterland between the two, and its mood is replicated on *It's Not The First Time*.

Idlewild remain as dependable as ever.

Julian Marszalek

Vernon Reid

Hoodoo Telemetry *ARTONE LABEL GROUP/THE PLAYERS CLUB*

Living Colour guitar wizard stretches way out on solo album.

Vernon Reid sits at the point where art and the mainstream collide. Living Colour had the hits, but the guitarist (and also founder of pioneering collective the Black Rock Coalition) has played with everyone from jazzer Bill Frisell to Whitney Houston.

Reid's second solo album is a cross-section of his musical brain, covering everything from the seething, disjointed hip-hop of *Black Fathom Five* to *My Little Zulu Baby*'s dislocated folk-blues. His protean playing powers these tracks, from the head-spinning flurries of *Door Of No Return* to the dislocated blues of *My Little Zulu Babe*, but its elevated above mere six-string blow-out by a cast of guest vocalists, the best of whom is American singer Rachid (on laid-back album highlight *Beautiful Bastard*). Reid himself chips in with a shaky vocal on *In Effigy*. As a singer, he's a great guitarist, but as a guitarist he's out there on his own.

Dave Everley

AFI

Silver Bleeds The Black Sun *RUN FOR COVER*

Twelfth album digs deep into the alt.goth punks' 80s influences.

Despite having broken into the mainstream with 2003's *Sing The Sorrow* and 2006's *December-underground* both going platinum, AFI never seem to have really received their dues in a 34-year career that's progressed without any real discernible misstep.

On new album *Silver Bleeds*

PRESS

The Black Sun, a tribal drum battery heralds the *Pornography/Juju* era-influenced opener *Bird Of Prey*. Then, rapidly shifting gears, *Behind The Clock* delivers a brooding, none-more-black post-punk vibe with chiming riffs. *Holy Visions* is *Vision Thing*-era Sisters Of Mercy, and the lush, Morricone-derived cinematic centrepiece *Spear Of Truth* could have worked comfortably in Sisu.

With its Edgeian and McGeoch-esque riffs, *Silver Bleeds The Black Sun* doesn't contain much to complain about. An album of two halves, the seesawing tempos and plethora of ideas might demonstrate a lack of overall cohesion – for example, *Ash Speck In A Green Eye* sounds like Blaqk Audio (vocalist Davey Havok and guitarist Jade Puget's electronica side project). But who cares, it's still the best 1983 album released in 2025.

Alex Burrows

The Third Mind

Right Now! *YEP ROC*

Supernatural supergroup.

On their third album since 2020's self-titled debut, the supergroup co-founded by ex-Blasters guitarist Dave Alvin and Camper Van Beethoven bassist Victor Krummenacher again shows immaculate taste selecting vintage nuggets as launch pads for seven unrehearsed jams recorded live in an LA studio.

Joined by guitarist David Immergluck (Counting Crows) and drummer Michael Jerome (John Cale, Richard Thompson), astonishingly idiosyncratic vocalist Jesse Sykes becomes a lightning conductor as, sitting in a circle to record, the quintet spontaneously combust around Elizabeth Cotten's haunted loss ballad *Shake Sugaree*, Pharoah Sanders's *The Creator Has A Master Plan* and The Youngbloods' *Darkness, Darkness*, once covered by Mott and now a climactic electric folk mantra. Richard Farifa's *Reno, Nevada* is reached aboard Howlin' Wolf's *Smokestack Lightnin'* riff, Alvin duetting with Sykes, Lee-and-Nancy-style.

While Sykes is strangely captivating throughout, Alvin's psych-sizzled guitar excursions, ringing like QSM's John Cippolina duelling with Robby Krieger, are ignited by the ensemble's luminescent telepathy on Otis Rush's majestic slow blues *Reap What You Sow*, ominously compelling murder ballad *Pretty Polly* and heart-melting Sykes-Alvin slowie *Before We Said Goodbye*; like David Johansen's miraculous Harry Smiths teleported back to San Fran's psychedelic ballrooms

Kris Needs

Guerilla Toss

You're Weird Now *SUB POP*

New York-based electro-punks celebrate the strange on album five.

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking of the experimental as overly serious and (whisper it) sometimes a little pompous. But then there's a band like Guerilla Toss, who bring the party to the world of the avant garde. As the title suggests, this fifth album finds them reclaiming weirdness as a superpower to be celebrated.

The skronk is strong, squelchy bass and synths bouncing on a wave of wonk-pop of the finest order – fuzzy, funky and on the edge of hysteria. Frontwoman Kassie Carlson's good-time party vibes constantly ride the edge of a magnificent, messy meltdown.

Pavement's Steven Malkmus produces, a masterful choice given his ability to harness his own beautiful strangeness, and his appearance on *Red Rag To Angry Bull*, a laid-back yin to Carlson's sugar-jittery yang, is a beautiful bridging of underground indie rock generations. *Life's A Zoo*, meanwhile, is a breathless, chaotic dance-off, firing off in a million directions at once.

You're Weird Now is the sound of a band with absolute confidence in their own unique world, punk rock without boundaries forging fearlessly ahead into the future.

Emma Johnston

Dizzy Reed

Rock'N'Roll Chose Me *50Q*

GN'R keyboard player's second solo album.

It's 17 years since Guns N' Roses released *Chinese Democracy*, three years longer than the gap between that album and its predecessor *The Spaghetti Incident*?. Even Dizzy Reed – keyboard player and Axl Rose's constant loyal lieutenant since 1990 – is getting bored with twiddling his thumbs.

On his second solo album, Reed displays the same maximalist approach as his boss. *Revolution LA* and *Falling Down Together* are straight-ahead rock'n'roll songs supersized with wild electronic effects and stacked vocals that elevate the music rather than distract from it. Vocally he's no Axl, but his strident voice is what these already busy songs need. *Squint* and *Earn 2 Burn It* and *Bombz Away* could pass as lost latter-day GN'R songs, but *D.I.B* and showstopping semi-ballad *My Wounds Don't Bleed* are different enough from the day job.

Entertaining, even if it won't quell the appetite of the three people still hanging on for a new Guns N' Roses record.

Dave Everley

John Lees' Barclay James Harvest

Relativity *CHERRY RED*

One more story to tell.

With JLBJH having announced the end of touring after 2023, you might have assumed they were winding down. But no, there was another album in the pipeline.

After a career just shy of 60 years, nobody was about to start rushing things, particularly as it's all tied around a concept of "human and cosmic interaction and relationships". Plenty of scope there, then – maybe too much. At least the music is more concise – as concise as their somewhat magisterial style allows – and is unlikely to raise too many eyebrows except to indicate "Oh, they can still do it, then." Much of it is wisely reminiscent of their 2013 album *North*, although nothing reaches the heights of *On Leave*, perhaps the last classic Barclay James Harvest song.

There are many worse time-warps to be caught in. This one is at least safe and comfortable.

Hugh Fielder

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling

Shiraz Lane: doing something bold and refreshing.

Shiraz Lane

In Vertigo *FRONTIERS*

Recently on a whistle-stop jaunt around the UK's clubs, pubs and festivals, Shiraz Lane are among the younger and more determined bands doing their damndest to keep the flame of melodic hard rock burning. In keeping with current industry practises, the Finns teased their fans with three singles before unveiling this fourth full-length album, and if *Dangerous, Bullshit* and *Plastic Heart* pushed your buttons then oh boy are you in for a treat.

In Vertigo continues the quartet's impressive evolution from formulaic big-haired wannabes to something with more substance and staying power. The super-groovy *Stone Cold Lover* is an attention-grabbing way to begin the album, while *The Ray Of Light, Live A Little More* and especially *Come Alive* – which drew unlikely comparisons to Michael Jackson and Kylie Minogue on YouTube – add a thoroughly shameless layer of pop-friendly dynamics. Gatekeepers can be such cruel critics, huh?

To these ears, Shiraz Lane are doing something bold and refreshing. Screw the haters!

Stan Bush

Born For Battle *CARGO*

Best known for *The Touch*, which featured in the film *The Transformers*, Stan Bush once memorably admitted: "I never left the 1980s." His first album in five years, *Born For Battle* lives up to such a lofty mission statement. Now in his seventies, the Floridian still writes a mean lighter-waving anthem, *Invincible* and *Stand Or Fall* serving as affirmation of such age-defying craftsmanship.

Leah-Martin Brown

Love & Other Crimes *FRONTIERS*

With 'Mutt' Lange in the credits for production, co-writing and background vocals on this lively and colourful full-length debut, Leah-Martin Brown has friends in high places. Although the Aussie singer and songwriter fills a natural niche within Gen Z-approved pop, her colourful, confessional style grants elbow room for outbursts of rock guitar. One to keep an eye on.

Hartmann

Twenty Times Colder

PRIDE & JOY MUSIC

Marking two decades of Hartmann, a vehicle for the noted German singer and guitarist Oliver Hartmann (an occasional participant in the all-star troupe Avantasia), *Twenty Times Colder* is the quartet's ninth album. Here, then, is the sound of a band that know exactly what they're doing, and they execute their task with unflappable class.

Andy And The Rockets

Casino *DELAPOP*

Swedes Andy And The Rockets have established a hard-gigging presence in their homeland. Produced by and with co-writing credits from Eclipse and W.E.T. mastermind Erik Mårtensson, *Casino* is a strong, confident and triumphant-sounding third set that should allow the four-piece to get a firm foothold in the international market.

PRESS

Chrissie Hynde & Pals

Duets Special *PARLOPHONE*

Old faithfuls and a few surprises revisited by the Pretenders frontwoman and some peers.

Chrissie Hynde is madly in love with her record collection, and doing covers of some of the songs she holds dear have played almost as big a part in her career as her own compositions. With recordings such as The Kinks' *Stop Your Sobbing* with The Pretenders and Sonny & Cher's 60s hit *I Got You Babe* with UB40, and her 2019 solo covers album *Valve Bone Woe*, she's wrapped other people's stories in her velvety, incorruptibly cool voice over the years and made them her own.

Duets Special, then, was all but inevitable, it's just a surprise that it didn't happen sooner. Comprising sparse versions of some old karaoke classics alongside deeper dives, it's a late-night, stripped-back session that stays in the slow lane and indulges in the songwriting.

Elvis is represented twice: *Always On My Mind* with Rufus Wainright, whose high, torch-singer voice is a lovely contrast to Hynde's impeccably warm tone, and the much, much covered *I Can't Help Falling In Love With You* has a weary sadness to it when she's teamed with Mark Lanegan – the fact that they never met in real life heightening the poignancy. Billy Paul's *Me And Mrs Jones* features a smooth, sultry and soulful k.d. lang, and with Brandon Flowers on a slightly over-faithful take on 10cc's *I'm Not In Love*... well, they do what they can with the pretty cringeworthy source material.

It's some of the less obvious choices, though, that produce the magic. Not many people would touch Morrissey with a bargepole these days, but the bold choice of his *First Of The Gang To Die* is one of the livelier moments, Hynde and Cat Power revelling in the melodrama of the original. John Lennon hated The Beatles' *It's Only Love*, but here Hynde and Julian Lennon give it the love it deserves with a sweet and jaunty run-through. And while Low are represented with Debbie Harry in *Try To Sleep*, harmonious and hypnotic, it's a hook-up with that band's Alan Sparhawk on Cass McCombs's *County Line* that really gets the bottom lip trembling. It's a sublime, somnambulant thing that shines from its core.

The pace of *Duets Special* is slow and steady, so inevitably there are moments where it drags a little, but to hear one of the great rock voices of her era in her element, sharing the music she loves with musicians she respects and complements, is a quiet, low-key joy to behold.

Emma Johnston

Militarie Gun

God Save The Gun *LOMA VISTA*

An album loaded with miserable ear worms.

Having landed something of a critical hit with their debut *Life Under The Gun* in 2023, Militarie Gun's chief songwriter Ian Shelton must be keenly aware that the pressure is on for album number two, although plaudits are probably the furthest thing from his mind if the lyrical concerns of *God Save The Gun* are anything to go by.

This is not a happy album, although the band pull off the neat trick of stacking each tune with instantly memorable pop melodies despite the tales of personal trauma. Throw in some pure hardcore aggression, and the result is tracks that hammer and surge with honesty and cathartic violence. Buzzing with overblown drums and distortion, *BADIDEA, Maybe I'll Burn My Life Down* and *Kick* are emotional bruisers, while immense riffs and melodies tumble over each other throughout *God Owes Me Money, Laugh At Me* and *Thought You Were Waving*. Fortunately there's some respite in the acoustic sunshine of *Daydream*, and Shelton appears to be feeling a bit more positive by the time of the closing title track.

Genre-defying angst never sounded so good.

Essi Berelian

Biohazard

Divided We Fall *BLKIIBLK*

New York hardcore OGs flex.

If Slayer had spent the past 13 years working out in a prison yard, they might sound like Biohazard. In fairness, that's not too far from what original vocalist/bassist Evan Seinfeld has been up to, pumping iron first in HBO's *Oz* then later as a porn actor.

Divided We Fall marks the first Biohazard album to feature its original four-piece since 1994's *State Of The World Address,* and finds the band on brilliant and muscular form. The hip-hop influences are lighter than on previous releases, and in their place is an increased sense of thrash frenzy, with songs like *Eyes Of Six* and *Death Of Me* chucking out riffs Kerry King would've killed for in Slayer's own 90s crossover flirtations. But not even the Big Four could go toe to toe with Biohazard when it comes to spine-threatening grooves and sheer visceral intensity. This album ensures they remain one of hardcore's most unrepentantly brutal bands.

Rich Hobson

Ihlo

Legacy *KSCOPE*

Accomplished prog metal.

It's been quite a while coming, but prog-metal trio Ihlo have finally produced a follow-up to their 2019 debut *Union*, and it is every bit the leap forward and consolidation they need. This album has everything: big, crunchy riffs jousting with thunderous rhythms, plenty of electronic embellishments, and a super-confident grasp of melody. The band still love their moody one-word titles – as befits an album looking at the hollowness of technological advancement for profit – and the musical scope of tracks like *Cenotaph* and *Haar* is suitably ambitious and immense. The jewel in the conceptual crown, though, must be *Mute*, which revels in its own ominous quietude before cranking up the melodrama and volume for the climax. The ambitious title track is a worthy runner-up, delivering nearly nine minutes of labyrinthine twists and turns.

A third album a little bit before 2030 would be quite a treat.

Essi Berelian

Luther Dickinson featuring Datrian Johnson

Dead Blues Vol. 1 *STROLLING BONES/NEW WEST*

Blues covers with multiple twists.

Although none of the composers still walk the earth, that's Dead as in Grateful. And blues as in reinvented. In fact this record doesn't sound anything like you might expect from the North Mississippi Allstars (and sometime Black Crowes) guitarist.

It grew out of his lockdown project of instrumentals – all blues standards covered at various times by the Grateful Dead – radically rearranged on bass and synthesisers. These took on new life as backing tracks when Dickinson

KJ PRICE/PRESS

persuaded revered session singer Datrian Johnson to add his uniquely soulful vocals. Bo Diddley's *Who Do You Love* no longer has that familiar beat, Slim Harpo's *King Bee* emerges as something closer to jazz funk, and opener *One Kind Favor* (originally by Blind Lemon Jefferson) sounds like a lift from the *Shaft* soundtrack. In tandem with Dickinson's bold new rhythms, Johnson's extraordinary voice reinvents every standard he sings, from *Mystery Train* to *Little Red Rooster.* Familiar songs, breathtakingly redefined.

Neil Jeffries

Soul Blind

Red Sky Mourning
CLOSED CASKET ACTIVITIES

No-nonsense New Yorkers conjure up grunge-gaze soundscapes on album two.

Soul Blind channel their grungy influences through a riff-laden hardcore lens, and they're convincing enough. Lead single *Hide Your Evil* goes all in with the kind of fierce, scything riffs you'll find on Deftones' first couple of albums. On *Mistake To Wonder* frontman Chris Hoerter has perfected his Chino Moreno impression to a tee. *Red Sky Mourning* captures a distinct vibe, but where it falters is that you're never expecting the band to spring a surprise. Most of these tracks are blanketed with stoical riffs and hazy textures that are never entirely captivating. All those iconic grunge and alt.metal bands could bang like hell, but they always had quirks to set them apart. Soundgarden would whip out a well-timed saxophone. Stone Temple Pilots' Scott Weiland would sometimes don a frock. Right now, Soul Blind's approach feels a bit too clinical.

Chris Lord

Yellowcard

Better Days *BETTER NOISE MUSIC*

Re-formed punk-pop stalwarts get new lease of life.

Although this Florida band's commercial fortunes gradually faded after their 2003 peak *Ocean Avenue* perfected the pop smarts that characterised their brand of emo, they seem revitalised since reuniting (they split in 2017) to tour on that album's 20th anniversary.

New album *Better Days* was produced by Blink 182's Travis Barker, who seems to have become something of a latter-day mentor for them, occupying the vacant drum stool into the bargain. The radio-friendly hooks of the title track and *Love's Letters Lost* are as enticing as ever, but when Barker's pummelling hardcore percussion assault and Sean Mackin's signature violin offset *Honestly I* they add a more original edge to a typically love-lorn pop vignette.

The bitter-sweet leaving-home nostalgia of *Bedroom Posters* might be sung by 40-somethings, but it remains eternally resonant, and when Avril Lavigne guests on *You Broke Me Too* it creates a fine power ballad duet for the Warped Tour generation.

Better? You bet.

Johnny Sharp

Mozart Estate

Tower Block In A Jam Jar
CHERRY RED

Cult indie legend Lawrence returns.

Following the publication last year of Will Hodgkinson's critically acclaimed biography *Street Level Superstar: A Year With Lawrence*, the former Felt, Denim, Go-Kart Mozart and now Mozart Estate lynchpin has decided to capitalise on the publicity by releasing an album comprised largely of re-recorded songs from 2005's *Tearing Up The Album Chart* (essentially a collection of demos recorded during a difficult period in Lawrence's life). And while these new band versions could hardly be described as muscular – as usual, chirpy charity-shop keyboards dominate – they're certainly more polished.

A genuine eccentric with a knack for writing instantly memorable hooks – e.g. *Summer Is Here* and *Electric Rock And Roll*, two more of his alternative-reality chart smashes – Lawrence has delivered the best daft/sincere novelty pop album you'll hear all year. It's a sugar rush.

Paul Whitelaw

Projector

Contempt *ALCOPOP!*

Droll despair is elevated to an art form.

Contempt, Brighton trio Projector's second record, is an album of mad collisions and inspired contrasts. High and low culture meet to create a (football) riot of ideas; timely nihilism and ennui sidle up to puppy-dog enthusiasm; sand-dry wit laughs in the face of despair; absurdism tickles kitchen-sink realism; beauty marries beastliness. And that's just the lyrics. Musically they veer from the path of The Fall on opener *The Sham! The Sham! The Sham!* to frantic art-pop with a heart of blackened noise on the vitriolic, disdainful *It Surely Has Been Hell*. Loneliness and longing haunt the goth-tinged, Interpol-esque new wave of *Phantom Limb*, while elegant old-school indie, bleak, vulgar punk, gritty grunge and sweet, starry-eyed shoegaze do battle as we dig ever deeper. Coming together as a whole, *Contempt* is super-smart and endlessly intriguing.

Emma Johnston

Bar Italia

Some Like It Hot *MATADOR*

Indie-by-numbers collection that doesn't add up.

For all the plaudits that have rained on indie trio Bar Italia (named after the Soho hangout, not the Pulp song, as they've always been at pains to point out), *Some Like It Hot*, the band's fifth album in as many years, is distinctly underwhelming. Despite the occasional moments of spikily explosive action, far too often the album feels as if the band headed down to the landfill armed with shovels for some unnecessary exhumation. *Fundraiser* evokes the angular indie and asymmetric hairdos of the mid-noughties ,while *Omni Shambles* and *Eyepatch* tag along in similar fashion. The drunken waltz of *Bad Reputation* offers a few minutes of interest, but the album fails to adequately raise the temperature.

Julian Marszalek

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Killer Hearts: searing, sneering sleazy punk'n'roll.

Killer Hearts

Unchained And Bloodstained *SCREAMING CROW*

Killer Hearts are what was supposed to happen to rock'n'roll: all the old guys retire, and the new blood hits the scene, strutting their black leather stuff. Nobody expected the Stones to still be playing at 80 years old, for the various members of GN'R to actually survive, for Johnny Thunders to become the world's forgotten boy, so the new wave of the new wave of skinny rockers in mascara piffed right out.

Killer Hearts don't care, though. They continue to operate like rock'n'roll is king, like it's the only thing that could possibly matter, like they'd gladly lay down their souls for the stuff. *Unchained* is almost religious in its devotion to the good times, a searing, sneering heat-blast of sleazy, midnight-is-right punk'n'roll, a wall-to-wall assault on mediocrity that could make a believer out of almost anybody. Enter their inferno, and be healed by the flames.

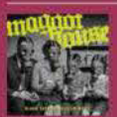
The Oxys

Casting Pearls Before Swine *CLEOPATRA*

Austin rockers The Oxys have been releasing albums at a furious pace since their pandemic-era inception. Here we are with number three, and it's a total monster. Part GN'R ferocity, part hook-heavy 90s melodic punk, they have ever-so-slightly turned up the accessibility factor of the slavering beast within. Killer.

Maggot House

Blank Tapes & Nuclear Waste *SELF-RELEASED*



Ooze scraped out of a dumpster, a puke-covered grindhouse come to snarling life, a cassette tape from hell recorded in a decommissioned nuclear fallout shelter. Songs about VHS trash like *Slime City* and *Toxic Avenger*. Songs about hating your boss and grimy sleazebags. Maggot House are a punk-rock nightmare. And I love it.

The Moldy Tapes

Press Play *SELF-RELEASED*

This month's been a doozy. Every one of these records could be my album of the year. *Press Play* is a reckless, rubber-legged ode to underground rock'n'roll. The unknown and unnamed singer is such a dead ringer for Angry Anderson that this could easily be the latest and greatest new Rose Tattoo album. If I play this at my next backyard cook-out, the house will probably burn down.

The Prize

In The Red *GONER*

Not since Blue Öyster Cult has a three-guitar band delivered so many hits. Melbourne's The Prize play pop-forward hard rock in the vein of Flamin' Groovies, Cheap Trick and even Thin Lizzy, with brain-worming choruses, warm guitar tones, and chugging, major-chord guitars that could put a smile on anybody's face. If jukeboxes still existed, every song on here would be on 'em.

PRESS

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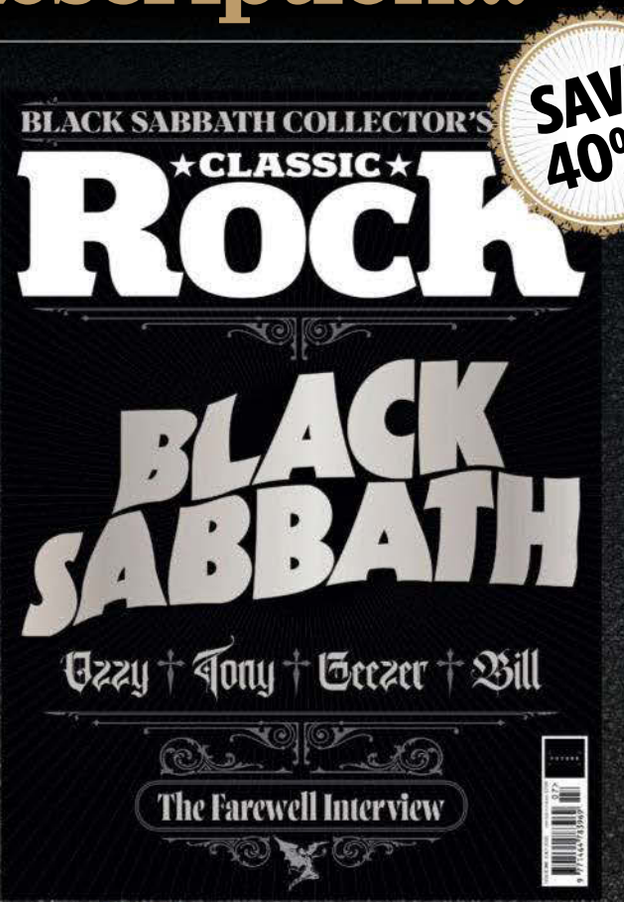

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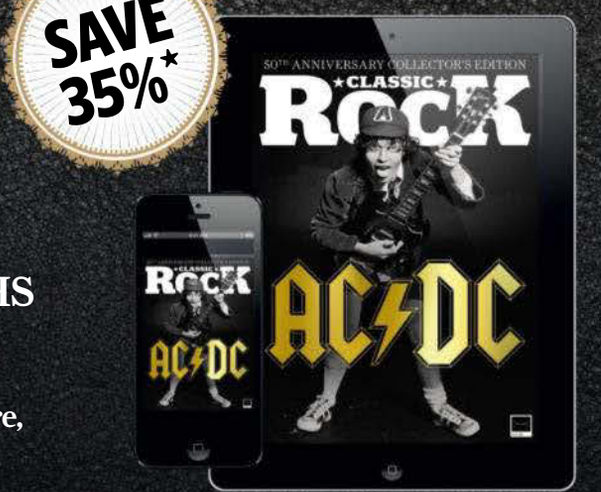

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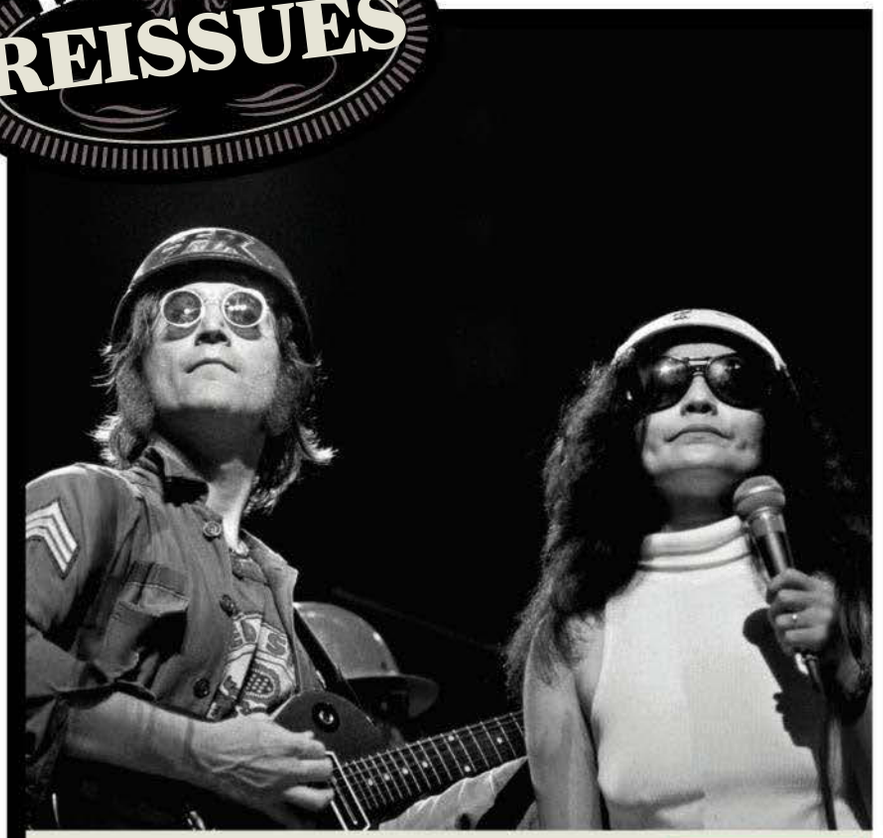


John & Yoko/ Plastic Ono Band

Power To The People *UMG*

Live, studio and demo tracks and an almost album from Lennon's NYC years, collected.

Before there was the Lost Weekend, there was the Political Year. When John Lennon arrived in New York, home of radical politics, art statements and Yoko Ono, he found himself plunged into an environment very different from the relative calm of life at his Tittinghurst country house, where his home was open house to everyone from the radical Yippies to folkie Phil Ochs. Defying the authorities, Lennon allied himself with every cause going, from the jailing of White Panther John Sinclair to the Bloody Sunday shootings. And where once his songs had been vague musings about mind games and having no possessions, now he was singing slogan songs even more specific than Paul McCartney's *Give Ireland Back To The Irish*. Ironically, given his former opposition to live performances in his previous band, Lennon was also part of the New York live scene, hooking up with local rockers Elephant's Memory and playing shows with them and Yoko. All this activity did nothing to endear him to the FBI, but then nothing short of going back to England would have.

This outpouring of creativity and activism was recorded, some of it released at the time (the spontaneous-sounding *Some Time In New York City*) and some of it not (a concert with Elephant's Memory). Now it has all been put together in an epic nine-CD collection, including most of *Some Time In New York City*, both live shows, and a collection of home demos, some of which feature Phil Ochs. The result is not so much a snapshot of an era as a very detailed portrait of a short period in Lennon and Ono's lives.

Once you strip away the flim and the flam – the booklets, the photos and the new mixes – you are left with some reasonably good live music (Elephant's Memory bring to Lennon's music a bluesy heaviness that sometimes suits it and sometimes doesn't), some intriguing demos (arguably the best material here, whether it be rare Lennon originals or decent rock'n'roll covers) and most of *Some Time In New York City*, an album that suffers from: a) being terrible, especially *The Luck Of The Irish*, a song that makes Ed Sheeran's *Galway Girl* sound like The Chieftains), and b) the omission of its one great song, whose title means it has been excised from the album.

One for the history buffs.

David Quantick

Slipknot

SK25 (Deluxe) *ROADRUNNER*

Debut from nu metal's noisiest gets revamped and remastered.

Even within nu metal's menagerie of misfits and mavericks, Slipknot stood out. An 18-legged behemoth wearing masks and boiler suits, screaming '*Fuck it all, fuck this world, fuck everything you stand for*', they seemed less like metal's next big thing and more like harbingers of the apocalypse. Turns out they were both.

In a scene that now includes chart-toppers like Sleep Token and Ghost, it's impossible to overstate how much impact *Slipknot* – and indeed Slipknot – had on 21st-century metal. But the dated production has left it at times more millstone than milestone. This 25th-anniversary reissue goes some way to redressing that.

With 78 tracks of cut songs, demos, remixes and live performances, as well as fully remastered original tracks, spread across six coloured LPs, *SK25* is a comprehensive document of Slipknot's early days. Although polished up, the clarity of the mix ensures it loses none of the fury that made songs like *(Sic)* and *Eyeless* so electrifying, while the demos shed light on the evolutionary leaps Slipknot were making to differentiate themselves from their nu metal peers. It's thrilling to behold, and the best possible insight into how Slipknot gave mainstream metal its biggest reinvention since Metallica released *Kill 'Em All* in '83.

Rich Hobson

The Pogues

Rum Sodomy & The Lash (40th Anniversary Edition) *WARNER*

Irish punk perfection.

Whatever about their first album, this record landed like a thrown pint in 1985, stirring everyone with even an ounce of green blood by reclaiming Irish balladry and come-all-ye's from the woollen-jumper crowd, and sticking a punk rocket up the music's jacksie.

It didn't hurt that The Pogues, great players all, comported themselves in a manner that Keith Richards would baulk at, but it was Shane MacGowan's songwriting, a match for the trad shapes they commandeered, that made them. If all he'd ever written was the marvellously moving *A Pair Of Brown Eyes*, we'd still be talking about him.

The second disc of this edition adds the essential *Poguetry In Motion* EP, which includes possibly MacGowan's greatest triumph in the beautiful, strings-and-trumpet-driven torch song *A Rainy Night In Soho*, as well as the band's two fingers to the purists with *Planxty Noel Hill*. The version of *The Old Main Drag* from a 1985 Janice Long radio session is probably superior to the Elvis Costello-produced original, and *Sally MacLennane*, live at Glasgow's Barrowland, captures the pandemonium the band unleashed in their pomp. Even a throwaway run at the Lovin' Spoonful's *Do You Believe In Magic* is properly Pogueified and rattles like a three-wheeled pram.

One might argue they'd make better records (like *Hell's Ditch*, the hungover one), but their legend is built on this one. MacGowan has been all but deified in Ireland since his passing. The raggedy genius on display here is the reason why.

Pat Carty

Foghat

Fool For The City (50th Anniversary) *RHINO*

Bad-boy boogie and blues.

Another anniversary, another opportunity to buy something you might already have.

Fool For The City – with its cover featuring drummer Roger Earl fishing over an open manhole in the middle of a New York street – is possibly Foghat's finest album, packed to the eyeballs with wonderfully crunchy blues rockers, not least the very fine title track and one helluva signature song in the immense and grinding *Slow Ride*.

What makes this 50th-anniversary reissue really worth considering, however, is the additional previously unreleased live set. Mixed and mastered by bassist/producer Nick Jameson, the tracks capture Foghat at the very top of their game on two nights at the Aragon Ballroom in Chicago in late 1975. It's raw and heady stuff, a take-no-prisoners performance, as they say, that ignites immediately with a ripping version of the title track before easing into *Home In My Hand* and absolutely demolishing *My Babe* and *Honey Hush*, the latter in particular delivered like

PHOTO BY MICHAEL NEGRIN © YOKO ONO LENNON

a boogified forearm smash to the lugholes. The inevitable *Slow Ride*, introduced by vocalist/guitarist Lonesome Dave Peverett as a "dirty" new song, already sounds like a classic, with guitarist Rod 'The Bottle' Price playing some seriously smoking slide licks, and closing the vinyl version is a lengthy take on *I Just Want To Make Love To You*. If you grab the two-CD format you also get bonus tracks *Wild Cherry* and *Maybelline*, which can only be a good thing.

Really, they just don't make 'em like this any more.

Essi Berelian

Oasis

(What's The Story) Morning Glory? (30th Anniversary Deluxe Edition) *IGNITION*

The brothers' big one.

Let's take a wild stab in the dark and assume you've heard most of this before. The Gallagher brothers' cash register-bruising second album permeates the air at the moment, much like it did back in '95, thanks to their equally record-breaking reunion tour.

They were undeniably fantastic in Dublin. But the star of the show by a country mile, then and now, was Liam Gallagher's incredible voice. Located at the intersection between Lennon and Lydon, it's an enviable howl that transforms material like *Roll With It* – barely half a song, and the general bolloxology of lyrics about cannonballs, wonderwalls, and sinks full of dishes – into something elemental and irresistible.

That said, he'd still be knocking around the estate had it not been for Noel's gleeful, magpie-in-a-jeweller's songwriting; Yoko Ono must have considered siccing the lawyers on him for *Don't Look Back In Anger* alone. His best songs here – *Some Might Say, Morning Glory*, even the, ahem, Glitter-aping *Hello* – rock with a swinging authority and a balls-the-size-of-marrows confidence that jostles Oasis onto the pantheon of great British rock'n'roll bands.

This anniversary cash grab (they're surely good for a fiver until payday at this stage) is rounded out with previously unheard acoustic versions. While (whisper it) *Wonderwall* and *Champagne Supernova* were dirge-like enough already, magnificent B-side *Acquiesce*, a great song in any arrangement, and a lovely *Cast No Shadow* prove again that the Noel and Liam show was, for a while, absolutely unbeatable.

Pat Carty

Melvins

Reissues *IPECAC*

Three random albums, on whatever "holy heart attack vinyl" might be.

By 2001 it was clear that there was little point in speculating about how Melvins would sound from album to album. *Colossus Of Destiny* (**7/10**) was out there even by their standards. "Recorded at a San Francsico club that will remain nameless," King Buzzo claims in the sleeve-notes, and featuring Tool guitarist Adam Jones, it's an hour of rambling, noodling and distortion. It makes no sense whatsoever, but it's packed with magic, melody and wonder.

Lurching, for no obvious reason, to 2012, *Freak Puke* (**8/10**) was credited to Melvins Lite, introduced stand-up bassist Trevor Dunn, late of Mr Bungle, and featured a super-dense version of Paul McCartney's *Let Me Roll It*, among sprawling roller-coasters such as *Tommy Goes Berserk*, which is how the Grateful Dead might have sounded had they been grunge mavens.

A year later, *Everybody Loves Sausages* (**9/10**) was a deranged, guest-packed (Jello Biafra, Clem Burke) covers album, plus *Heathen Earth*, a self-penned tribute to the Throbbing Gristle album of that name. It included a weirdly sweet take on *You're My Best Friend*, a gripping *Station To Station* and a brief, breathless *Black Betty*. Bam-ba-lam indeed.

John Aizlewood

The Genesis

A Story *HAND OF GLORY*

Not *that* Genesis. The other one, from 1960s Luton.

In December 1966, Luton R&B group The Mantis Set had their minds blown by a Jimi Hendrix gig, and in '67 mutated into an entity called Genesis. Oblivious to a Charterhouse-based group with the same name, the crew stumbled into creating paisley-patterned psych-pop originals. But recordings came to nought before the band dissolved.

A chance equipment listing on eBay by the band's keyboard player Chris Stokes brought the music to new ears, and now a debut album, as The Genesis (step back, legal beagles), has been put together.

Unpolished and a little loose at the joints, *A Story* will nonetheless have charm for collectors of soft psych. Recalling Procol Harum, The Creation and The Zombies, and even a touch of Honeybus's baroque gentility, there's musical and lyrical ambition, playing with moods within a gothic-romantic concept. The record is strong in its hit rate of nicely crafted melodies and some good vocal harmonies (*Reflections*, *Happy Man* and *LOVE*), and when they hit a groove (*Lazy Teenager, The Trial pt 2*) it's a hip-hop crate-digger's delight.

The Genesis didn't expect to set the world on fire. They didn't even understand what they were doing at the time, and *A Story* is all the better for its innocence.

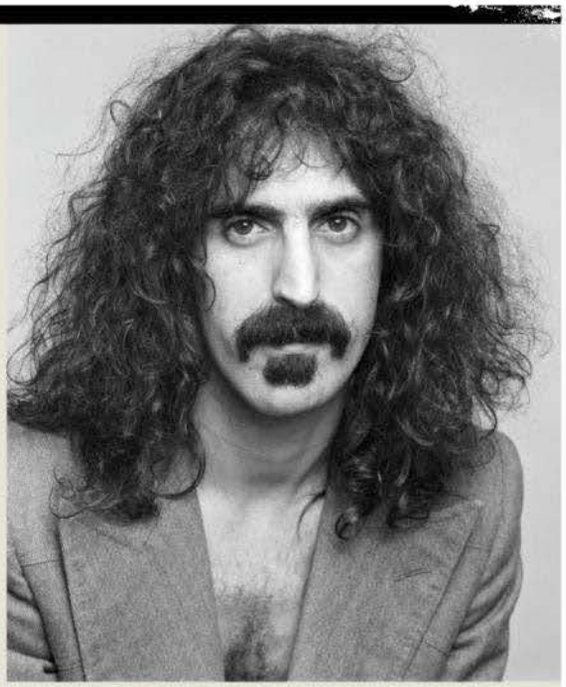
Jo Kendall

Frank Zappa And The Mothers Of Invention

One Size Fits All (50th Anniversary)

ZAPPA RECORDS/UME

Zappa landmark album reissued with extra bells, whistles, kitchen sink etc.



SAM EMERSON

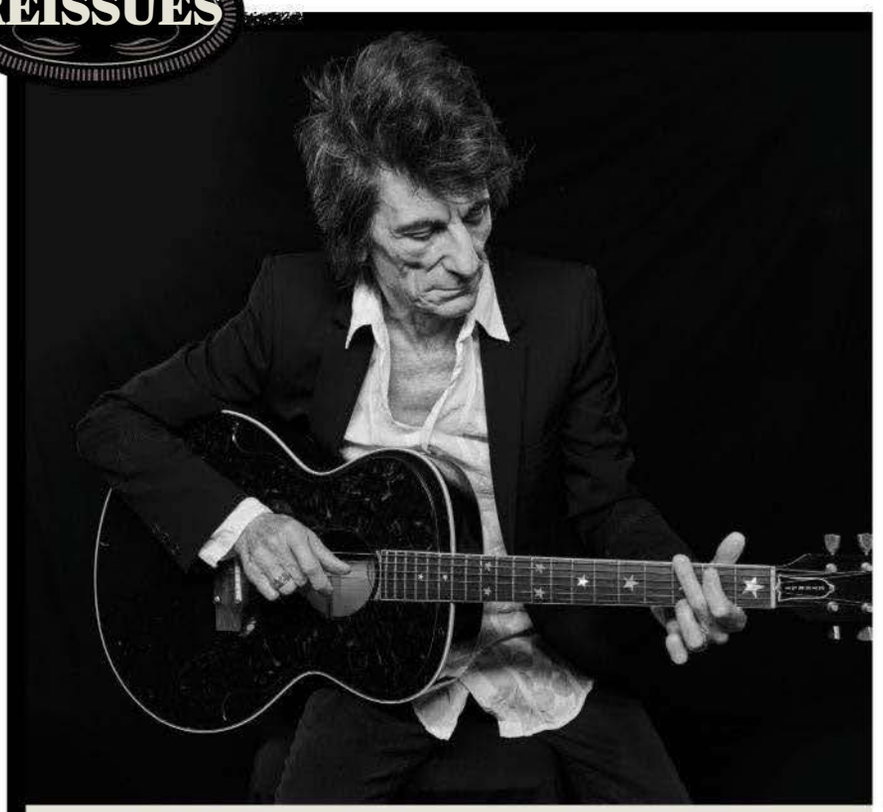
And still they come. It seems that not a day goes by that there isn't yet another extended Zappa gem released to luxuriate in. His sons Ahmet and Dweezil might still be embroiled in exasperating legal wranglings over the family name, but in the meantime Ahmet appears to be spending his days rifling through his dad's extensive archive with the help of Joe Travers, gatekeeper of the Zappa vault. And what riches it holds. Frank didn't lay down a guitar lick without pressing 'record' or go on stage without the sound engineer capturing that night's performance.

The original *One Size Fits All* begins with the complex, clever and complete *Inca Roads* (basic tracks recorded in LA, guitar solo from a show in Helsinki: Zappa 101) and continues to transcend from there. It didn't hurt that the Mothers at that point included keyboard player George Duke, drummer Chester Thompson and saxophonist/singer Napoleon Murphy Brock.

Upon its release, Zappa complained about its lack of record label push. But where do you start with an album that begins with sheer bloody poetry and ends with the heartfelt (and mostly sung in German) *Sofa No. 2*?

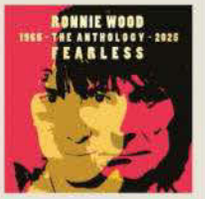
A rough mix of *Sofa No. 2* is one of this reissue's 58 tracks (the original album was nine songs long), although when Zappa says 'rough mix' it can sometimes sound as complete as a Jim Steinman edit. This is the kind of treasure trove that'll make a Zappa fan fall on it like a vulture on a dead body. It includes a complete, previously unreleased show from Rotterdam from autumn 1974, with the Mothers in thunderingly good form – *Stink-Foot* is just brilliant, *Inca Roads* is simply out of hand live, while *Cosmik Debris* transforms into a wonderfully loose jazz work out over the best part of 13 minutes. There's also the now ubiquitous Blu-ray surround-sound and Dolby Atmos mixes of the core album. Which is all well and good if you're the kind of person who likes to feng shui your speakers and lives alone. Much better to play the three different original rough mixes of *San Ber'dino* back to back and marvel at a music legend lost. Glorious.

Philip Wilding



Ronnie Wood

Fearless: The Anthology 1965-2025 *BMG*



Honest Ron's finest moments.

Its release coincident to Wood's half-century as a Rolling Stone, this 38-track two-CD/vinyl chronicles an auspicious career that was already significantly storied prior to its subject becoming the ever-present, invariably good-natured Sooty to Keith Richards's reliably mischievous Sweep. From the garage swagger of The Birds' *You're On My Mind* ('64) and grinding hedonistic freakbeat of The Creation's *The Girls Are Naked* ('68), through a game-changing, bass-toting stint with the Jeff Beck Group (its surface barely scraped by the solitary Rod-propelled, bottom-heavy Zep-precursor *Plynth*) to a run of tracks from what many consider his career's zenith, as Rod Stewart's mirror image/foil (again), both with and without the Faces.

Flying captures the tight-but-loose, R&B/country blues-based barroom alchemy of the Faces, and while it's rightly a trio from *A Nod's As Good As A Wink* that epitomise the quintet's magic here it's former Faces bandmate Ronnie Lane's *Ooh La La* that provides the backdrop to Wood's finest vocal performance.

Since his integration into the Stones it's easy to forget how totemic Wood and Stewart were in the early 70s; Rod solo album title tracks *Gasoline Alley* and *Every Picture Tells A Story* crackle with a chemistry that entranced the immediately pre-glam zeitgeist.

From 1974's *I've Got My Own Album To Do* there's the heavily Jagger-ed *I Can Feel The Fire* that cost Wood his credit on the Stones' *It's Only Rock 'N' Roll* (a song deafeningly notable for its absence), George Harrison co-write/duet *Far East Man*, and drowsy, Stewart-benefitting ballad *Mystifies Me*.

Ron's Stones account opens with *Hey Negrita*, an ace reggae-inspired riff he brought to Munich's studio-based Stones auditions (that ended up on *It's Only Rock 'N' Roll* with a Jagger/Richards credit). Acknowledged co-writes finally follow: *Dance (Pt 1)*, *Everything's Turning To Gold*, both riff-inspired grooves of no fixed format; two from *Tattoo You*: *Black Limousine*'s urban blues and reflective ballad *No Use In Crying*; *Undercover*'s *Pretty Beat Up* is an often overlooked peach with David Sanborn on sax and Keith shining on bass.

Hereon in it's all Ron, solo bon-bons, notable collaborations (with Billy Gibbons, Slash et al) and a final quartet of previously unreleased gems, including a priceless heavy-lidded Chrissie Hynde lead vocal on Allen Toussaint's *A Certain Girl*. Some hit, some miss, but there's an awful lot to like herein. And after all, what kind of a monster would you have to be not to like Ronnie Wood?

Ian Fortnam

Franz Ferdinand

You Could Have Had It So Much Better *DOMINO*

Scottish art-school indie titans' finest hour revisited 20 years on.

The pressure was on for Franz Ferdinand when they released their second album. Their self-titled debut had won the Mercury Prize, reignited the public appetite for arch, art-school rock, and was successful on both sides of the Atlantic. There was a lot to live up to.

It would have been easy to churn out another 10 *Take Me Out* clones. But while the thumping disco and angular indie remains at the fore, not least on the jittery, caffeinated, oversexed *Do You Wanna* – a cheerfully hedonistic bounce through the party scene of the day – *You Could Have Had It So Much Better* saw them exploring their own somewhat chilly, detached cleverness and adding a warmth and heart to it all. *Eleanor Put Your Boots On* offers a sweeter, gentler, more human and playful side, while the acoustic *Fade Together* is pure unexpected romance, the arch veil of insouciance dropping quite beautifully. And while *Walk Away* is a resounding 'fuck you', it's the prettiest 'fuck you' they ever mustered.

You Could Have Had It So Much Better, now remastered, shows Franz Ferdinand at their most creatively fertile, with chunks of political satire and wry takes on modern relationships cementing their reputation as a Pulp for the noughties. And it still sounds fresh today.

Emma Johnston

Peter Hammill

The Charisma & Virgin Recordings 1971-1986 *UMR*

First 14 albums, fantastically expanded.

"Peter Hammill's great. A true original... I'm damn sure Bowie copied a lot out of that geezer. The credit he deserves just has not been given to him." So declared John Lydon when playing 1975's startlingly punk-predicting *Nadir's Big Chance* on his Capitol Radio appearance in 1977.

Such praise highlighted Hammill's routine confinement to prog godfather possibly keeping the Van der Graaf Generator polymath from wider recognition as one of the UK's most intense, eloquent and unpredictable songwriters, performers and sonic explorers.

This overdue 18-CD collection, presenting his first 14 albums, with fascinating extras including a 76-page Hammill-annotated book, effectively makes that point as his schizophrenic pinballing between epic gothic psychodrama and exquisitely sensitive ballads unfolds.

Long-time fans will gorge on *Fool's Mate* demos, five Peel sessions, live concert versions and a 1978 Kansas City set including VdGG's *A Plague Of Lighthouse Keepers* delivered with possessed intensity. Perhaps curiously, two discs go to Stephen W Taylor's stereo remixes of *The Future Now* and *pH7*, and both are revisited again in 5.1 surround sound on Blu-ray. There's also a Video Vaults disc drawn from European TV concerts and his '79 appearance performing *Tintagel By The Sea* on BBC kids' show *Playaway*.

While Bowie, Cave, Gabriel, Mark E Smith and Lydon acknowledged Hammill's influence from apocalyptic onslaughts straining at the mental floodgates to raising every bar for heart-gouging confessionals and love songs, the true impact of Hammill's fearless, hyper-prolific odyssey was never suitably bottled until this magnificent set.

Kris Needs

Supergrass

Road To Rouen *BMG*

A different cut of the 'Grass.

Album number five saw these former teenage tearaways in a reflective mood. Singer/guitarist Gaz and keyboard player Rob Coombes's mother had died, and drummer Danny Goffey was receiving a lot of unwelcome attention in the tabloids. No one was feeling particularly chipper.

In place of the former youthful buoyancy was a new, maturer Supergrass: more acoustic, stripped-back, with the occasional zither and ukulele thrown in. The convivial *St Petersburg*, the album's first single, was recorded in one take, no overdubs – softened, slower, sadder than usual. Not an obvious choice for a single, but the band were in no mood to care. As bassist Mick Quinn commented wryly: "I don't think anyone was in the mood to release another set of *Alright-*

ELIZABETH HOFFPRESS

style jovial pop songs." Other singles – *Fin*, widely interpreted as a eulogy for Coombes's mother; *Low C*, with its gorgeous 70s guitar lilt – were even more introspective.

Beautiful and maudlin, *Road To Rouen* is an oddity among the Supergrass albums – a series of melancholy odes recorded in the cold winter of 2004-5 in the French countryside – but one that never fails to deliver, riff-wise and mood-wise.

The 20th-anniversary reissue adds previously unheard live recordings and 'lost' single *Don't Leave Me Alone*, and comes as two coloured vinyl LPs.

Everett True

Wrathchild America

Climbin' The Walls

DISSONANCE

Both their albums. Not to be confused with the British Wrathchild.

Wrathchild, Evesham's finest glam rockers, were most displeased when a Virginian band of the same name secured a major deal with Atlantic. The Brits sued, the hotly tipped Americans expanded their name and, delayed by the litigation, their hotly tipped 1989 debut *Climbin' The Walls* just sneaked into the US Top 200.

In hindsight, Wrathchild America's two albums (plus two extra tracks including a cover of the wry 50s blues *I Ain't Drunk I'm Just Drinking*') confirm US superiority. Beyond a mighty cover of Pink Floyd's *Time*, *Climbin' The Walls* oozed confidence, hooks, and some remarkable drumming from future Godsmack man Shannon Larkin. Always keen to take Metallica-style twists within songs, they were, perhaps, felled by their own diversity, especially on 1991's chart-shy *3-D*, where *Prego* incorporated both sleazy grunge and jaunty jazz, while *Surrounded By Idiots* was as caustic as it promised.

John Aizlewood

My Morning Jacket

Z 20th Anniversary Deluxe Edition ATO

Band's landmark fourth album gets platinum makeover.

Strange to think that when My Morning Jacket were making the album that would come to define them as a band, they chose the title *Z* to indicate their demise; the last letter of the alphabet was to herald the final chapter of the band's output. Which, as history tells us, was not the case.

Co-produced with John Leckie (Radiohead, Pink Floyd), *Z* became a classic moment of catching lightning in a bottle for the band, the falsetto harmonies of *Wordless Chorus*, the smoky blues of *Lay Low* turning into a crescendo of pure southern rock wig-out, while the timeless *Gideon* was as wide as the sky.

Time has done nothing to dent *Z*'s impact, and this latest remaster gives these musical gems even more lustre. It pulls back the curtains on those sessions, including four songs from those long days and nights spent recording. The lingering *Where To Begin* (originally recorded for Cameron Crowe's film *Elizabethtown*) is especially good, as is the lightly skipping *The Devil's Peanut Butter*, a song so good that the band still can't explain why it was left off the original album. It's rare that you can really recommend a demo tape, but the early songwriting sessions here really highlight the magic of those early ideas; *Dondante* is ethereal, other-worldly, *Knot Comes Loose* is all sparkle and shine. It's like standing at an open window and stumbling across musical alchemy as it pours out to fill the night sky.

Philip Wilding

King Crimson

Reissues PANEGYRIC/DGM

More box sets from the box set kings.

The comprehensive release of everything King Crimson ever recorded continues apace. The 2010 box set reissue of second album *In The Wake Of Poseidon* (89 tracks, new Steven Wilson remix) has now been superseded by the 2025 edition (60 tracks, another Wilson remix), while third album *Lizard* has been upscaled from its 2009 version (62 tracks, more Wilson) to a 2025 set containing 68 tracks and, yes, Steven Wilson. Whether anyone needs any of this – or, indeed, seven different recordings of various solo instrumental sections of *Lady Of Dancing Water* – is up for debate, but while wallets continue to quiver with anticipation (cost of living crisis? What cost of living crisis?) the churn will surely continue.

Wilson's 2009 stereo mixes are now replaced by 2025 iterations, and there are 5.1 Surround Sound versions for listeners with the appropriate equipment or extra ears. He does his usual remarkable job, improving both albums' dynamism and clarity without attempting to modernise either, never drifting from Robert Fripp's original vision. On *Poseidon* (**8/10**), Greg Lake and Gordon Haskell's vocal lines snap into focus, and an alternative version of *The Devil's Triangle* (borrowed from the *Sailor's Tale* box set) sounds more cinematic than ever, as if the cinema was manned by drunken oompa-loompas.

Lizard (**7/10**) benefits most from Wilson's magic, the sonic clutter peeled back so that Fripp's guitar and Keith Tippett's piano can shine and render Crimson's most avant-rock album a little more palatable for those who struggle with such things. *Cirkus* remains terrifying.

Fraser Lewry

Nirvana

The Show Must Go On MADFISH

Twelve-CD collection from one-hit-wonder, delightfully eccentric creatives.

GERED MANKOWITZ/PRESS

This is wild: a new Nirvana box set – 12 CDs strong, with three bonus discs of out-takes, demos and rarities, plus an 88-page hardback book. But no, it's not *that* Nirvana. This collection comes from the original Nirvana, the London-based psych/freakbeat/baroque/proto-prog outfit formed in the mid-60s. They split in 1971, re-emerged in 1985, and are still active today. Aside from a 1992 out-of-court settlement with their more famous namesakes – and a rather ill-advised trippy cover of Kurt and co's *Lithium* (included here) – there's no connection between the two bands.

The core are Patrick Campbell-Lyons and Alex Spyropoulos, who met in the summer of 1966 and conjured a sound steeped in Swinging London – think Honeybus, Procol Harum, Zombies, early Bee Gees – with literary and classical flourishes and more than a touch of Lewis Carroll whimsy. Winsome, pastoral, and riddled with quirky rhythm changes, Nirvana were baroque pop to the core.

Their debut, *The Story of Simon Simopath* (1967), produced by Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, was hailed by *Melody Maker* as "a science fiction pantomime album". One of the earliest concept albums, it carries the same charm as the strings on *Eleanor Rigby*, utterly of its era – twee, perhaps, but beautifully built and thoroughly likeable. The band's legend even includes Salvador Dalí splattering black paint on them during a French TV performance of their 1968 hit single *Rainbow Chaser*. Naturally, their live sets featured French horn and cello.

Simon Simopath is one of eight studio albums collected here (stereo and mono versions). Others have a more filmic feel – *Black Flower*, for example, which Blackwell rejected for not measuring up to *A Man And A Woman*. It was eventually released on the Pye label in 1970 as *Dedicated To Markos III*, in a pressing reportedly limited to just 250 copies.

By 1972's *Songs Of Love And Praise*, Nirvana adopted a harder edge. Its horn-laden take on *Rainbow Chaser* pays tribute to the Canterbury scene (Ayers, Wyatt etc.), and if you squint just slightly a track such as *The Blind & The Beautiful* could easily be mistaken for Kinks circa *Something Else*. The Campbell-Lyons single *Everybody Should Fly A Kite*, meanwhile, ranks alongside anything from Donovan .

The Show Must Go On collection is eccentric, charming and delightfully out of step.

Everett True

Elton John

Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy (50th Anniversary Edition)

Peak 70s Elton, a songwriting triumph.

Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy is 50 years old, and it stands up well. Elton John and his writing partner Bernie Taupin ruled the early 70s with radio bangers, glam choruses, piano boogie and ballads. While the best of their early material had been doused in Americana (The Band, Ray Charles, Leon Russell), their massive success was putting the accent on the pop tunes and the amusing japes. Their rescue plan was this concept album in 1975.

The comparisons to The Beatles and *Sgt. Pepper's* were understandable. Both aimed to create a thematic song sequence, and the results were impeccably packaged. In Elton's case the album cover was an illustration by Alan Aldridge – part Marvel comics, but also with decadent hints of Hieronymus Bosch.

Arguably, Elton's team had delivered the more coherent story. The music was modest, vulnerable and autobiographical. Elton and Bernie took us from London pubs to a superstar trail that would sell out the Dodger Stadium in LA. The album had a bankable hit with *Someone Saved My Life Tonight*, an escape from wedding bells that hinted at the singer's fraught sexuality. Few of the other tracks were catchy by design, but that was the point. The record was made to reward close listening.

This anniversary edition includes early demo recordings of important songs. A snatch of *Bitter Fingers* is excitingly close to the finished version, as Elton's voice cuts in – "Nearly got it," he figures, correctly. Elton and his lyricist Taupin's working method is impressive. The title track is a literate tale of humble beginnings, in thrall to American culture, performed with a western twang.

Elton's band members are also playing at the top of their game. Several would be absent from the next album, the mediocre *Rock Of The Westies*. So it's an opportunity to savour drummer Nigel Olsson and bassist Dee Murray, sustaining the groove on *Tell Me When The Whistle Blows*, alongside a swish, orchestral score. Props also to Davey Johnstone's guitar playing, never intrusive, frequently great.

The album topped the US chart in May, and a month later Elton played it at Wembley Stadium with some fresh musicians and a more rocky perspective. The tracks, included here, are admirable enough. One of the bonus tracks, *Philadelphia Freedom*, is testament to Elton's affinity for dance music. He was restless and prolific.

A fine legacy.

Stuart Bailie

Burlesque

Burlesque/Acupuncture

MIG

Both albums from much-touted nearly-were jazzoid art-rockers.

Foretelling the future's a tricky business. Not least in the ever-evolving arena of pop music, and never more so than in the 70s, an era that's effectively defined only by its ceaseless forward momentum. So it was as '76 prepared to click over into '77 and the sage denizens of the inky music press applied their expertise to selecting 'next year's ones to watch' from all available runners and riders.

Burlesque were a shoo-in, with their post-Roxy Music/Be-Bop Deluxe art-school leanings and Zappa/Albertos risqué college-circuit comedy shtick. They were a bit 50s, their charismatic sax-toting vocalist Ian Trimmer had a hairstyle that wouldn't have looked out of place in Slik, while ace guitarist Billy Jenkins favoured similarly demonstrative proto-geek chic to Wilko Johnson and Rick Nielsen. Burlesque were as '76 as drought. What could possibly go wrong?

Punk, obviously. Even as those priceless end-of-year recommendations arrived hot off the presses, Burlesque had been wholly anachronised by the inescapable Pistols/Grundy debacle. They released two albums in '77. Their live debut *Acupuncture* captures the carefully choreographed set (honed since '72) that charmed the contemporary rock media, while its self-titled studio-based sequel keeps on art-rocking against the tide (*Bizz-Fizz*) even as it desperately attempts to punk itself relevant (*Jerkin'*). But the game was up, and the band split a month after *Burlesque*'s release, having failed to even survive the year they were touted to dominate.

Ian Fortnam

Rousers

1979 Sire Session *LEFT FOR DEAD*

Grease-slicked slice of New Yawk punk history.

Quiffs ahoy! Another niche resurrection job by reissue label Left For Dead, *1979 Sire Session* is a sparky and highly collectible little slab of New York recording history, capturing punkabillies Rousers laying down tracks live in the studio for Sire Records with Ed Stasium producing.

The result distils Rousers' riotous love of New York Dolls and Duane Eddy to raw perfection with plenty of twang and bags of energy, vocalist Jeff Buckland's incredible Buddy Holly-esque vocals coming across all bubblegum and teenage heart-throb. They give *Ramrod* and *Movin' And Groovin'*, a couple of Eddy instrumental classics, a proper turbo-charged seeing to, but it's the band's gig-honed originals – *Be My Girl, Lonely Summer, Product Of The USA* and the fantastically speedy *Man Oh Man* – that point to what could have been a long career beyond the club circuit had any of their potential record deals come to proper fruition. The band eventually managed just a single release of *Party Boy*, produced by MC5's Wayne Kramer, in 1981, and the Sire recordings ended up in the vaults for 45 years – until now.

Every copy of *1979 Sire Session* should come with a tub of Royal Crown hair grease.

Essi Berelian

Mickey Newbury

Reissues *FAT POSSUM*

The writer of *An American Trilogy*'s American trilogy.

When he died in 2002 aged just 62, felled by emphysema, Mickey Newbury was mostly remembered for Elvis Presley's show-stopping cover of Newbury's *An American Trilogy*. Newbury was much more, though. Like Jimmy Webb, he was unashamedly literate, ever-rueful, always ambitious (but also self-sabotagingly uncompromising) and blessed with a dry wit, hence the atypically straight country of *She Even Woke Up Me To Say Goodbye*.

Back on vinyl, this remastered trilogy might not come with any additional tracks, but they eloquently state a case for wholesale rehabilitation.

Recorded shortly after Newbury had spent five years living in a car, 1969's *Looks Like Rain* (**9/10**) features actual rain, *I Don't Think About Her No More* as covered by Vampire Weekend, and the spectacular segued pair *33rd Of August/When The Baby In My Lady Gets The Blues*.

Two years later, the lavishly textured *'Frisco Mable Joy* (**9/10**) had a smattering of rain too and the original *An American Trilogy*.

PICTORIAL PRESS/ ALAMY

But what really startles is Newbury's vocal dexterity: rough as sandpaper on the tangy *Mobile Blues*, and as gothically stirring as Nick Cave on *The Future's Not What It Used To Be*.

By 1973's *Heaven Help The Child* (**8/10**) the mainstream was not going to be seduced, even after Presley's intervention. Newbury radically reworked four of his older songs, but the real standouts were the heart-stopping title track, which dips into *Auld Lang Syne*, and the extraordinary tale of *Cortelia Clark*. What a talent he was.

John Aizlewood

Alan Parsons Project

I Robot COOKING VINYL

Futuristic concept set revisited, with extras aplenty.

"It takes a special kind of genius to make music you can see," a US radio advert proclaims re. the super-expanded, four-CD+Blu-ray edition of Alan Parsons Project's second album. It goes on to claim that with his previous production work with The Beatles and Pink Floyd "he was preparing for a future that would transcend time".

Even though Parsons and chief co-writer Eric Woolfson didn't quite get there, *I Robot* certainly charmed audiences, even as punk's cultural wildfires were hotting up, and gave the Project their first US Top 10 album.

On this 70-track super-deluxe edition, curios such as the above advert are thrown in alongside rough mixes, isolated backing tracks, uncle Steve Harley and all. The latter of course takes a stirring turn at the mic for *The Voice*, but elsewhere other guest vocalists abound, as do alternative vocal takes. For just the £125 RRP you can play fantasy producer and decide which of the umpteen versions you'd rather have made it into it's original 10 tracks. Possibly not the *Boules Experiment*, in which Woolfson is inspired to punctuate the title track with the sound of French bowling balls clacking against each other, and *Hilary Western Vocal Rehearsal* ("Was that horrendous?") was of course never intended for public consumption, but they add light relief to this hefty package. But songs as good as *Wouldn't Wanna Be Like You* and *Breakdown* – funkier stuff than the more AOR material APP would later specialise in – along with West End-worthy balladry such as *Don't Let It Show*, still hold up, and stand up to repeated listens in various different dressings.

Johnny Sharp

Sweet

Live At The Marquee METALVILLE

Recorded in '86, shortly before the famous venue closed.

By 1986, Sweet included only two of the original members – Andy Scott (guitars) and Mick Tucker (drums). The rest of the line-up comprised bassist Mal McNulty (Slade), Phil Lanzon (Uriah Heep) on keyboards, and Paul Mario Day (ex-Iron Maiden) on vocals. Consequently, their sound is closer to generic heavy metal than to glam-pop, fronted by Day's serviceable caterwaul, although occasionally graced by Lanzon's synth flourishes, almost Hawkwind-like on, for example, *Action*, which is preceded by the sound of a ticking sequencer, while a crowd of what must have been a hardcore faithful chant "We want Sweet!"

As if exerting their senior privileges, Scott takes a solo on *Guitar Segue*, in which he slides up and down the fretboard frenetically, while Turner's drum solo affords a good opportunity for a piss break.

Highlights, inevitably, are the hits *Love Is Like Oxygen* and *Ballroom Blitz*, their class irreducible, even if Steve Priest's interjections are much missed on the latter. *Fox On The Run* survives metallicisation in its choral grandiosity, and Lanzon sprinkles a little keyboard wizardry on *Burn On The Flame*.

David Stubbs

Steve Howe

Portraits Of Bob Dylan / Natural Timbre CARGO

Is it rolling, Steve?

This back-to-back duo of turn-of-the-millennium solo works came at a particularly busy time for Steve Howe. He was involved in nearly a dozen albums over this period, including two with Yes and one with Asia.

He selected, arranged and produced his *Portraits Of Bob Dylan* (**7/10**) tribute in 1999 displaying a connoisseur's knowledge of his songs, a broad choice of guest singers and a melodic sense of arrangement. It kicks off with a 12-minute *Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands* featuring Jon Anderson, bringing out the rhythm of the song. He also has the contrasting female voices of Renaissance's Annie Haslam, Phoebe Snow and PP Arnold (who does an excellent job on *Well, Well, Well*), Keith West on *Lay Lady Lay*, and an almost unrecognisable Allan Clarke from The Hollies on *Don't Think Twice It's All Right*. But the most revealing cover comes from little-known Hull singer-songwriter Dean Dyson, whose rich voice permeates *The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll*.

2001's *Natural Timbre* (**5/10**) was an all-acoustic affair, in contrast to his *Quantum Electric* album a few years earlier. It's calm, complex and jazzy, with three Yes songs to provide a reference for fans: *Your Move, Disillusion* and *To Be Over*.

Hugh Fielder

Humble Pie

As Safe As Yesterday Is NICE

It's all gravy.

For Steve Marriott and Peter Frampton, Humble Pie was a chance to escape the 'screamers' who followed their respective previous groups Small Faces and The Herd, and move the two teen prodigies into tougher, more credible rock territory. Ex-Spooky Tooth bassist Greg Ridley added Northern gristle, and 16-year-old drummer Jerry Shirley, a Marriott protégé from short-lived Immediate Records signings Apostolic Intervention, brought young blood. Very much a melting pot of talents, collectively the ingredients were rhythmic rocking blues with a dash of psychedelia and country, topped with soul-power vocals. The touch points of Swinging London, the 'mustn't grumble' Cockneyisms and The Herd's fey kipper-tied pop, got the proverbial boot. From the song titles onwards (*Stick Shift, Alabama '69*), almost everything about this album has America in its sights. The Steppenwolf-penned *Desperation* opens the road to drive the point home. The ballads are plainly influenced by The Band's *Music From Big Pink*. Any British references are of the mythical, folksy sort, harking back to sweet-smelling cornfields and naked troubadours on the title track, and musket firing squads on *I'll Go Alone*.

Frustrated by Immediate's faffing with the sleeve design, Marriott told them to stick it in a brown paper bag. The master tapes were lost in transit to New York, resulting in a botched original release, so this remastered, remixed edition, the latest in the run from Kenney Jones's Nice imprint, is a welcome improvement. Rob Caiger oversees production and there's input from surviving former members Frampton and Shirley.

Of the six bonus tracks, four are studio out-takes, mixed by Shirley. Led-heavy instrumental *Zeptoe Through The Tulips* does what the title suggests (any resemblance between the intro of *I'll Go Alone* and *Communication Breakdown* is purely coincidental).

The appallingly named *Wrist Job*, aka *Pigs Trotters*, remains one of Marriott's finest songs and performances, regardless of the crass title. Frampton on lead guitar is celestial, the skywalking counterpoint to Marriott's raw earthiness. A match made in heaven.

Humble Pie's debut captures the euphoria of a band unshackled, free to spread their wings and fly, before they honed themselves into the hard rock, coke-fuelled juggernaut that Frampton fled in '71.

Claudia Elliott

CROLLALANZA/SHUTTERSTOCK

THE HARD STUFF
STUFF
MULTIMEDIA

Spiñal Tap II: The End Continues

Director: Rob Reiner

While this sequel was never going to match the original, there's still plenty to amuse.

A beloved part of rock folklore for the last four decades, Rob Reiner's acutely well-observed 1984 spoof documentary *This Is Spiñal Tap*, about a mediocre British heavy metal band touring America, is rightly regarded as an immortal comedy classic. The chances of this belated sequel equalling the original were always slim, so it deserves to be judged on its own merits. Even so, *The End Continues* still feels disappointingly patchy, more low-energy encore than full-blooded comeback album.

Returning as co-writers and co-stars, Christopher Guest, Michael McKean and Harry Shearer still share an easy comic chemistry as the core members of Spiñal Tap, improvising most of their deadpan dialogue. But the quick-fire wit of the first film is in shorter supply here, padded out with too much slapstick mugging and indulgent superstar guest appearances. The plot also feels thinner than the incident-packed original: after 15 years of estrangement, Tap's three crumbly co-founders agree to reunite for one final mega-show. In the strong opening section, director Marty DiBergi (Rob Reiner) tracks down Nigel Tufnel (Guest) at his cheese-and-guitar shop in Berwick-upon-Tweed. Cheese is a reliably funny motif as the narrative settles into a fairly repetitive loop of backstage bickering and gig rehearsals.

The Brit-heavy supporting cast includes Chris Addison (*The Thick Of It*) as tone-deaf, music-hating impresario Simon Howler, a broad and dated parody of Simon Cowell. Kerry Godliman (*After Life*) hits the target more as Hope Faith, daughter of Tap's legendary cricket bat-wielding ex-manager Ian Faith. Various memorable figures from *This Is Spiñal Tap* also have funny one-liner cameos, including Fran Drescher as Bobbi Flekman, and June Chadwick as Jeanine Pettibone, whose divisive relationship with McKean's David St. Hubbins was crucial to the first film. Alongside brief appearances by Metallica's Lars Ulrich, Questlove of The Roots, and Chili Pepper Chad Smith, both Paul McCartney and Elton John play themselves in longer scenes. Impressive casting coups, but slightly laboured as comedy.

In fairness, *The End Continues* does boast generally strong performances and a handful of knockout gags. Fans of the original will enjoy the throwback references to Stonehenge and drummers dying in freak accidents. The central joke remains great, but the laugh count is lower here, barely scraping a 6 rating where the original famously went up to 11. Ultimately, Reiner and his team have made a sporadically amusing but inessential coda to a brilliant, enduringly influential film.

Stephen Dalton

Ringo: A Fab Life

Tom Doyle *NEW MODERN*

Starr turn.

The recent news that there will be four film biopics of each Beatle has caused some wags to remark that the shortest of those films would be the one about Ringo Starr, as he had not had an interesting life compared to the other Fabs.

In fact, as Tom Doyle's superb new biography of the artist formerly known as Richard Starkey demonstrates amply, Ringo's life is full of drama, emotion, comedy, tragedy and incident. From a childhood of illness to his early musical career as the most admired drummer on Merseyside, via the Beatlemania years, his work on the greatest albums of all time, and his subsequent 1970s lost weekend (which also became his 1980s lost weekend), all the way up to a 21st century full of sobriety, EPs and respect, Starr's life has been a roller-coaster, a helter skelter, and dodgems.

Tom Doyle's biography, based partly on his own interviews with Ringo, is a rounded portrait of an extraordinary and underrated figure in popular music, and is as informative, witty and fast-paced as his early McCartney biog *Man On The Run*.

An essential purchase for music fans, never mind Beatles fans.

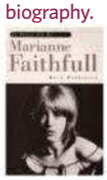
David Quantick

Marianne Faithfull: As Tears Go By

Mark Hodkinson

OMNIBUS PRESS

Scant update of 2013 biography.



Resuscitated after Faithfull passed away in January, Hodkinson's 2013 upgrade of the first biography he wrote, in 1990 (which Faithfull herself hated), gains two paragraphs in this 2025 update to deal with the ensuing 12 years. Sadly, these focus on her physical problems and funeral rather than on work she was proud of.

Speaking to Marianne extensively through 2018, she considered that year's intensely personal *Negative Capability* the crowning achievement of her then 55-year career, her most "honest" album with its themes of ageing and loneliness. Even a short account of the record's uniquely alchemical creation with Nick Cave, Warren Ellis, Rob Ellis etc would have finished her story on the triumphant note she deserves (along with 2021's *She Walks In Beauty* setting British romantic poetry to Ellis's music).

That aside, Hodkinson does a well-researched, detailed job recounting the lady's roller-coaster earlier life, speaking to more than 50 former friends, lovers and collaborators, including her father Glynn Faithfull (predictably no Jagger, Richards or Marianne).

In 2019, she asked this writer to undertake her definitive biography, before life and medical problems, including covid, got in the way. Her fully rounded story remains to be told.

Kris Needs

Tonight In Jungleland: The Making Of Born To Run

Peter Ames Carlin *DOUBLEDAY*

The birth of The Boss.

Born To Run, now 50 years old, was the album with which Springsteen invented Springsteen as we know him. But, as Peter Ames Carlin's gripping and authoritative book illustrates, it was no easy process.

Driven by equal amounts of belief and self-doubt, Springsteen had the shadow of the record company's axe hanging over him because as great as his first two records were, especially early masterpiece *The Wild, The Innocent & The E Street Shuffle*, nobody bought them.

Setting out to roll the dice one last time by combining the sounds that inspired him – Dylan, Spector, soul – with his romantic hearts yearning to be free lyrics, Springsteen and his cohorts laboured over every syllable and semiquaver. Carlin takes us through each step of the journey to that place Springsteen really wanted to go. There are abandoned out-takes, blind alleys such as an acoustic and downbeat *Thunder Road*, seemingly deaf record execs, and even The Boss throwing the finished acetate into a swimming pool in front of aghast engineer Jimmy Iovine.

PRESS

Framed by a recent interview with Springsteen, who touchingly listens back to the record on every anniversary, this book takes the reader deep inside an intense quest for artistic greatness and the validation of a dream.

Pat Carty

Peter Gabriel

Taking The Pulse

A performance master class.

After his 2010 classical covers project *Scratch My Back*, art-rock giant Peter Gabriel kept the New Blood Orchestra on to tour visceral and dramatic arrangements of his own back catalogue, captured here at Arena di Verona in Italy that September and framed with interpretive visual flourishes – dirt on the screen for *Digging In The Dirt*, haunted woodland for *Darkness* – by Gabriel's director daughter Anna. His more mood-building pieces take priority: string sections tap out the tribal beats of *The Rhythm Of The Heat* on the back of their instruments, *San Jacinto* ascends from intricate plucks to graceful climax, and *Intruder* is more slasher-flick soundtrack than housebreaker's confession, Gabriel whispering his lines with a stalker's menace while strings coil like garotte wire. *Signal To Noise* and *Red Rain* are the cinematic centrepieces, but sublime ballads *Don't Give Up*, *Blood Of Eden* and *Mercy Street* – plus a wonderfully jubilant *Solsbury Hill* concerto – steal a heart-stopping show.

Mark Beaumont

Punk: The Last Word

Chris Sullivan & Stephen Colegrave *OMNIBUS PRESS*

Familiar gospel retold in pertinent quotes.

What is punk? Who cares? Punk cannot be defined effectively because it's not an art movement confined and constricted by manifesto, it's a flag of journalistic convenience that got out of hand.

Its defining characteristics were only ever in the eye of the beholder. In 1977, when 'cool' (a flare-trousered hippie word with roots right back to jazz) briefly fell out of favour, 'punk' was adopted in certain spike-haired faux elitist circles as a way more acceptable synonym. Which is why it came to be applicable to almost anything. An unhelpful tenet that allows Wag Club founder Sullivan and ex-Saatchi ad man Colegrave to corral pretty much anyone they themselves admire – from pirates, poets, druids and dadaists to Warhol superstars and Keith Richards – into this vox pop-driven 600-page final word on the subject.

The pair's apparently penultimate word came with *Punk* in '01, a near-400-page, coffee table-crushing 12" x 12" tome which, while sumptuously illustrated and reassuringly weighty, wasn't exactly user-friendly. It's a fair bet many more bought it than read it due to its impractical heft. *The Last Word*, meanwhile, sees *Punk*'s general gist and quote-heavy content recut and redesigned across a significantly more readable format. There's a fair spread of contributors who offer insight into New York beginnings, London fruition and subsequent aftermath, though it's all a bit metrocentric and sniffy in tone (the scene's persistent Achilles' heel). You get the distinct impression that punk ceased to exist when Sullivan and Colegrave got tired of it, and while we're told "Hip-hop is black punk rock" there's disappointingly little supporting quotage from within the hip-hop community, so it's an intriguing hypothesis left hanging.

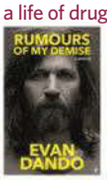
Ultimately, there's an awful lot to unpack here, but the last word? My arse. While 60-somethings still have mouths, there'll always be another.

Ian Fortnam

Evan Dando

Rumours Of My Demise: A Memoir *FABER*

Lemonheads frontman recalls a life of drugs (and rock'n'roll).

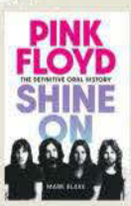


The son of a lawyer and a model, who attended a prestigious private school and grew up in a huge apartment, Evan Dando doesn't have a lot of trauma to draw on to explain some of his later-life decisions. His encouraging, liberal parents divorced, he suffered night terrors, and he was a lazy pupil so he ended up waiting tables when his peers and bandmates headed off to study at Harvard, but a tale of succeeding in the face of adversity this is not.

That he's alive is a miracle, and throughout this oddly emotionless, matter-of-fact memoir he's honest and surprisingly laid back about his monumental love affair with hard drugs. Although, hilariously, he does have a good old whine about the press reporting on his crack use on one junket, when he'd just told them he'd been smoking crack. His other complaint is the fixation on his looks (it's *just so hard* being handsome), and he spends a suspicious amount of time insisting that he never had sex with Courtney Love.

It takes a while for much to happen, but when it all kicks in there are run-ins with the police, the 90s LA celeb scene, and many, many drug-fuelled fuck-ups. There's even a bit of insight into some of the Lemonheads' wonderful songs, all relayed in the tone of a man who doesn't seem to see any of his actions as a particularly big deal. It's sex, shrugs and rock'n'roll.

Emm Johnston



Pink Floyd: Shine On – The Definitive Oral History

Mark Blake *NEW MODERN*

Band members and associates tell the full story.

Considering the extent of their success and that theirs is hardly a rags-to-riches story, Pink Floyd's long career has nonetheless been shadowed by acrimony, frustration, turbulence and the tragedy of the loss of songwriter and founder member Syd Barrett. One coup achieved by Mark Blake in this thorough and exhaustive account is persuading Barrett's sister, Rosemary Breen, to speak about the fragile, fractured genius. She sees Roger (his birth name) and Syd as two separate entities. As for Roger, she believes he was deeply affected by their father's death when he was 15, and that art, not music, was his real first love.

We learn how the middle-class background of the band members, the connections and opportunities they had, assisted their formation. However, it wasn't just Barrett's foundational psychedelic genius that propelled them to pop fame, but also their musical chemistry, despite personal antagonisms, enabling them to achieve the inaugural space rock of *Ummagumma*, although the group members are not prone to self-exaltation. They do furnish with more mundane but interesting details, such as it being only with fourth (proper) album *Atom Heart Mother*, according to David Gilmour, that the band members were earning more than their roadies.

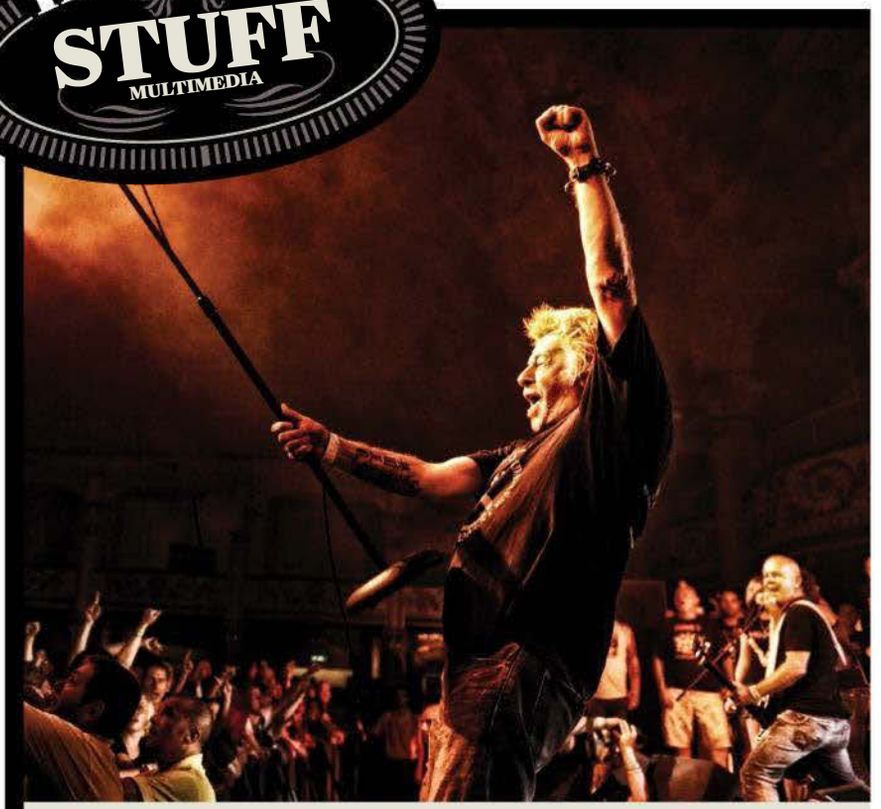
Antagonisms indeed; "Roger made Stalin look like an old muddle-head," was one of the barbs let off by Nick Mason re. Waters. Contradictions, too; Gilmour says that 1977's *Animals* was influenced by the raw energy of punk, while Waters claims not to have been aware of punk at all.

This account is enriched by associates, school contemporaries, music critics such as *Melody Maker*'s Michael Watts (to whom the group sent a package of offal following a negative review), Robert Wyatt, Roy Harper (who guested on *Wish You Were Here*) and Clare Torry, who invoiced for £30 for her magnificent vocal performance on *The Great Gig In The Sky* on *The Dark Side Of The Moon* – double her usual rate because it was on a Sunday. (Years later she negotiated herself a cut of the royalties).

The Floyd story petered out after *The Wall* and has been petering out slowly ever since. Mason, touring with his Saucerful Of Secrets live project, feels like Floyd's last remaining flagbearer.

David Stubbs

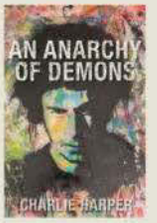
ANDREW WHITTUCK/REDFERNS



An Anarchy Of Demons

Charlie Harper *EARTH ISLAND*

Life and times of the UK Subs' elder statesman of punk.



Being knocked out of his cot from destruction wrought by one of Hitler's V-1 flying bombs in 1944 was an appropriate beginning to life for punk rock's most enduring survivor. Like Joe Strummer, Charlie Harper quickly abandoned his R&B pub rock band as soon as he first saw some punk gigs. But in contrast to the Clash boomer, he was already an industry veteran by the time he formed UK Subs in 1976. It's that pre-Subs era which makes for a fascinating insight into what motivated Harper's career and life.

This memoir begins with an unconventional upbringing and a fondly remembered childhood spent at Tylehurst, a progressive school in the idyllic East Sussex countryside. The school nurtured his love for animals and the outdoors. An admirably wayward youth unburdened by academia, Harper lost his virginity at the age of nine. He was taught by his stepfather how to use his fists to defend himself – which later came in useful when he was a victim of sexual assault and attempted rape.

An Anarchy Of Demons is an utterly exhaustive autobiography. Presented as an oral history in Harper's own voice, with impressive recall and unapologetic candour, he details friends and episodes from his youth and adult life that most people would have forgotten by their twenties, let alone their early eighties. Much more than just a band biography, Harper provides insight and opinion on not just the industry, but life in the past near-century. As such, the memoir also acts as a historic snapshot of what it was like growing up in post-war London; the end of wartime rationing in 1954, and the subsequent advent of rock'n'roll that he immediately fell in love with – witnessing the early-60s R&B explosion at the 100 Club with Kinks and Pretty Things gigs.

From working as a barber to busking and his early bands (Charlie Harper's Free Press, The Marauders), there's as much to this lengthy tome as to the career of the UK Subs – a band still touring relentlessly, who'll post half a century in 2026. The endless anecdotes from life on the road are as absorbing as they are hilarious.

The "King of Punk" (as ex-UK Subs/current Rancid guitarist Lars Frederiksen describes Harper in the foreword) has been doing it as long as Jagger and Richards. He turns 82 next May and hopefully will live many years yet, but, steeped in his genial charisma and creativity, *An Anarchy Of Demons* demonstrates why we should be celebrating Charlie's Harper's life in the here and now.

Alex Burrows

Wasted Opportunities: Tour Tales And Stories From The Road

Dan Hawcroft *FACTORY ORIGINALS*

Motörhead footsoldier's snapshot of life with Lemmy and co.

The music industry is full of people whose friends will tell them, after a few war stories down the pub: "You should write a book". They're often wrong, but any such advice to Yorkshire-born former Motörhead roadie Dan Hawcroft would be justified, judging by this memoir. That's partly because of his role for six years as something of a travelling PA for the late, entirely inimitable Lemmy. His observations of one of rock history's most curious creatures in his natural habitat make for a compelling read, while the tall tales of on-tour misadventure, from the 'naughty pint' in a European bar (seriously, don't ask) to the tranquilised horse 'doctor' that Phil Campbell once rode in on, are equally colourful. He also adds insights into the rock'n'roll dogsbody's perennially disregarded role, and the precarious and often thankless tasks they perform. They were the road crew. Someone had to be.

Johnny Sharp

Teenage Kicks: My Life As An Undertone

Michael Bradley *OMNIBUS PRESS*

Hard to beat.

While the concept of remastering books might suggest reprinting them in larger, bolder type, Omnibus Press's Remastered series gives previously published titles a second shot. For Michael Bradley's *Teenage Kicks: My Life As An Undertone*, the attention is merited.

Unlike pretentious punk elitists who flatulate about situationism, Bradley gregariously invites the reader into the inner circle of five Derry school pals who form a band that just happens to develop a knack for writing relatable, instantly memorable songs. Bradley writes with a similarly infectious charm, eloquently relating the Undertones' none-too-shabby highs (hits, *Top Of The Pops* appearances, touring America with the Clash), and comparably few lows (running out of steam in '83), from the perspective of a young lad having a whale of a time with his best mates.

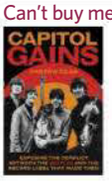
An essential account of a band who created their own inclusive punk scene, open to anyone who'd listen.

Rich Davenport

Capitol Gains

Andrew Cook *THE HISTORY PRESS*

Can't buy me love.



The American Capitol Records deeply resented being a subsidiary of the British EMI Records, and the two companies regularly traded "We know best" sneers. When it came to The Beatles, Capitol turned them down twice before grudgingly picking up *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*. In fairness, no British act had ever broken America before.

Capitol then proceeded to butcher the Beatles albums by reducing them from 14 tracks to 12, making 12 albums out of the first seven.

Capitol may claim to have broken The Beatles, but it was US variety show host Ed Sullivan who first became aware of Beatlemania, when he passed through Heathrow in 1963, surrounded by thousands of screaming Beatles fans. His curiosity was piqued, and in February 1964 The Beatles made their American TV debut on his show, to a audience of 85 million people. However, Capitol can claim to have made The Beatles richer than EMI ever did.

Hugh Fielder

Shadowplayers: The Rise And Fall Of Factory Records

James Nice *FABER*

Revised version of definitive 2010 account.

Essentially, the Factory saga is a guide to how not to run a record label, one where almost everyone was unsuited to their job. Semi-insider James Nice (aka James Hayward for his more academic work) told the whole sorry tale 18 years after the company's 1992 collapse.

In truth, there's little to add beyond a lengthy, typically forensic coda, but with his legal background, a tone that veers between empathetic and

ANDY THORN, REBELLION, 2010/PRESS

waspish and an eagle eye for detail, Nice is the perfect guide. Naturally, Joy Division/New Order, the money-draining Hacienda debacle and the drug-fuelled madness surrounding Happy Mondays dominate, but Nice takes us through the travails of also-rans such as Section 25 and the rather neglected Foreign Press, while taking tangents into OMD's post-Factory success. Ultimately, though, no jury will ever return a verdict on whether head man Anthony Wilson was visionary or charlatan.

John Aizlewood

Blitz: The Club That Created The 80s

Robert Elms *FABER*

Cultural explosion caused chiefly by clothes.

It's rich to suggest that people posing and dancing rerouted the trajectory of a decade, but that's kind of the point. Narcissism, reacting to punk's grit and the onset of Thatcherism was its own statement. As Elms, who was very much there, writes, "The characters at the Blitz... were impossible to embarrass. If you're prepared to get on a night bus to Cricklewood dressed as Bonnie Prince Charlie or Widow Twankey..." The Blitz Kids, denizens of London nightclub Blitz hosted by Steve Strange and Rusty Egan, morphed into New Romantics. Bowie co-opted them for his *Ashes To Ashes* video, and a bold pop era was born.

This lively book harmonises with an exhibition at London's Design Museum. With that shiny future now established as the past, Elms reminisces about nights of fashion and flair with Boy George, Spandau Ballet, Bananarama and Ultravox/Visage. Some faded to grey; others collected OBEs.

Chris Roberts

David Gilmour

Live At The Circus Maximus *TRAFALGAR & SONY MUSIC*

Concert film to the max.

From the very beginning, with cinematic black-and-white night-time footage of the outside of the Circus Maximus, quiet backstreet and cobblestone alleyways, soundtracked by Gilmour's sparse instrumental *5 A.M*, it's clear that this isn't going to be a run-of-the-mill concert film.

From when the cameras first pick out the stage and Gilmour, mostly shrouded in glowing smoke clouds, to the final shot, they pan and zoom slowly, cuts are well-timed, the lighting is beautifully designed. Nothing seems hurried. Nothing feels overblown. Nothing seems artful for art's sake.

While set in such an enveloping spectacle, let's not forget the music that gives it purpose. No disrespect to Gilmour's solo songs, but unsurprisingly it's the Floyd ones that seem to reach to the sky and take the audience highest with them: the elegant-*Breathe*; the still-statuesque *The Great Gig In The Sky*; the great *A Great Day For Freedom*; the twin peaks of *Comfortably Numb* and *Wish You Were Here*, the latter now something of global anthem that has a truly magic touch. As does Gilmour live.

Magnificent.

Paul Henderson

U2: Until The End Of The World

Bradley Morgan *GEMINI BOOKS*

Staring at the sun.

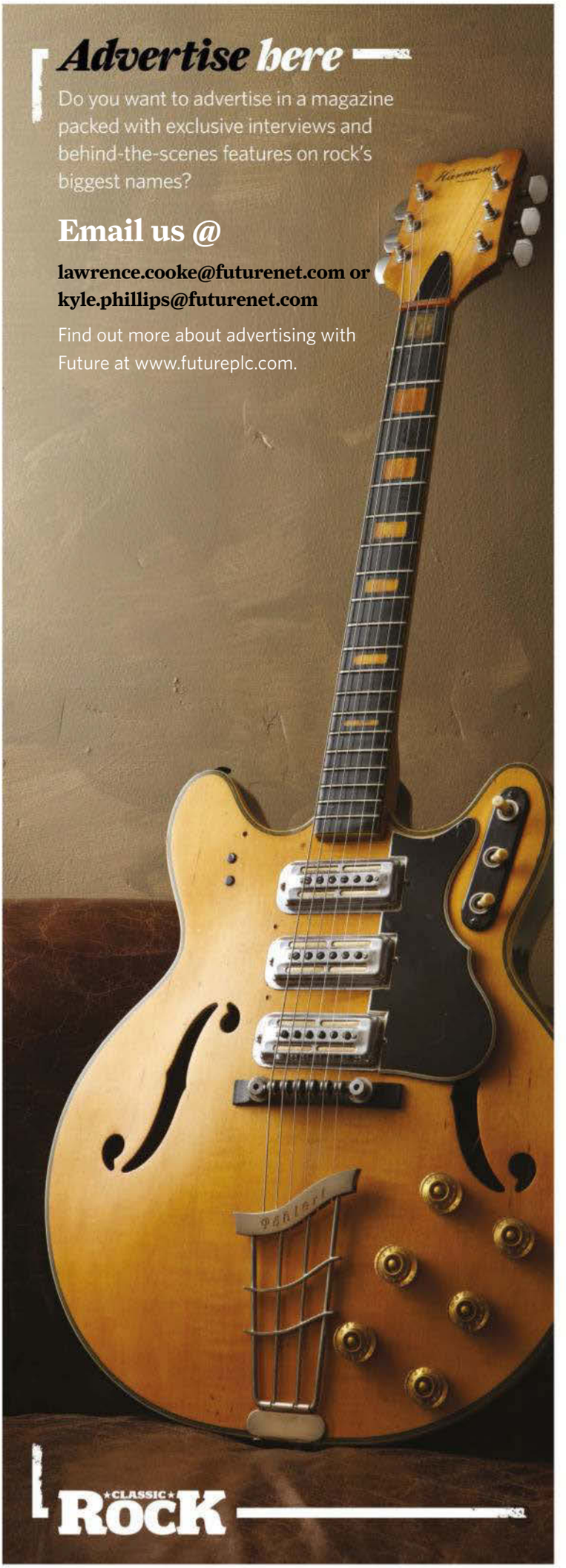
There are no great dramas to the story of U2. They have been more outspoken about The Troubles than most Irish bands would risk, but always from the human perspective, never the political. And their private lives have remained just that.

Right from their late-70s beginnings their shows were compelling, drawing on the energy of punk although not the music. Instead they developed a more anthemic style that they have regularly tweaked.

This book's author Bradley Morgan has not interviewed the band directly, but he has researched a range of contemporary quotes that illuminate the decisions behind each album. The fact that producers of the calibre of Steve Lillywhite, Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois and Flood willingly work with them is testament enough.

By the beginning of this century U2 appeared to have nothing left to achieve but they have continued to push forward. Lately, however, some of the challenges have become more convoluted, but they haven't tripped up yet.

Hugh Fielder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CLASSIC ROCK

Wylde by name...

Zakk Wylde

First with Ozzy and later with his own bands, in particular Black Label Society, he's established himself as a formidable guitarist.

Most of us know New Jersey native Zakk Wylde as Ozzy Osbourne's former axeman, then as the force of nature behind badass heavy metallers Black Label Society, but his impressive and deceptively broad catalogue is one that demands a proper examination.

Born Jeffrey Phillip Wielandt in January 1967, Wylde's music career skyrocketed following a successful audition to replace lead guitarist Jake E Lee in Ozzy's band. The story goes that a friend of a friend of Wylde, who at the time was playing on the local circuit with a Bon Jovi-aping band called Zyris, managed to deliver his demo tape to Ozzy's people. When Sharon Osbourne called to arrange a meeting, Wylde assumed it was one of his buddies taking the piss.

While *No Rest For The Wicked* – Wylde's first album with Ozzy – introduced the guitarist to the world, it was 1991's blockbuster *No More Tears* that cemented his status as one of the most influential and exhilarating players in rock.

As well as playing on further albums with Ozzy, Wylde released a record with the southern rock trio Pride & Glory, and the *Book Of Shadows* duology under his own name, but his bread is buttered elsewhere. That's Black Label Society.

Wylde's band is one of the most uncompromising and consistently great metal bands of the century. He's a self-professed Black Sabbath mega-fan, and you'll find plenty of that here. BLS have released 11 albums to date, and as says himself he's playing the music he loves.

Add one of Wylde's signature bullseye guitars, along with his unmistakable kilt and leather battle jacket combo, and you have a Viking-looking guitar god ready to bring the noise. Yet looks can deceive.

Wylde is a prodigiously talented musician, whether he's delivering hammerhead riffs, blinding solos, or perched behind a piano making us misty-eyed with his tender, plinking ballads about life and death.

On that note, not many will have been hit harder by Ozzy's passing. His first guitarist Randy Rhoads has legendary status, but Wylde was Ozzy's mainstay and fellow hellraiser until the very end.

At 58, Wylde is still willing to challenge himself. He's been involved with the reactivated Pantera since 2022, taking up the formidable mantle of his late friend Dimebag Darrell. And, as with Wylde's stellar Sabbath cover band, Zakk Sabbath, if anyone can pull it off with aplomb, it's him.

Chris Lord

Essential Classics

Ozzy Osbourne

No More Tears *EPIC, 1991*

Ozzy's sixth album was life-changing for Wylde, establishing the hotshot player as a global guitar hero. For Ozzy, the album might have been life-saving. He was at a low ebb after years of heavy substance abuse. After six months in rehab, a revitalised Osbourne resurrected his career with *No More Tears*, a platinum seller packed with tunes and a more mature hard rock sound. *Hellraiser*, one of several songs co-written with Lemmy, is a bona fide classic. *Desire* and *S.I.N.* are equally anthemic, but the centrepiece is the title track: a seven-minute, goth-tinged opus about a serial killer, that shudders and sways with Wylde's epic guitar playing.

Black Label Society

1919 Eternal *SPITFIRE, 2002*

The one that established Black Label Society as a doom troopin' force. Wylde dedicated *1919 Eternal* to his father, a WWII veteran. On brand, *Lords Of Destruction* sounds like the apocalypse. Its relentless, foreboding chugs make it one of Wylde's heaviest creations. During his brief, pre-Metallica tenure with the band, Robert Trujillo played bass on *Demise Of Sanity* and *Life, Birth, Blood, Doom*, the former an irresistible three-minute banger with Wylde's vocals straight from Valhalla, the latter a shadowy detour with tolling bells and a deadpan lyric: *'Life, birth, blood, doom, the hole in the ground is coming round soon.'*

KEVIN NIXON

Superior Reputation cementing

Black Label Society

Mafia *ARTEMIS, 2005*

BLS's most complete set of songs. It's not like Wylde has ever been short of chest-beating metallic power, but *Mafia* sounds even more assured than what came before. *Fire It Up* builds around a titanic, talk box-infused riff. Another live staple, *Suicide Messiah* – inspired by Scott Weiland – channels the torment of addiction with bludgeoning guitars and one of the great Wylde solos. And there's a case to be made that *In This River* is the finest composition of his career. He performs everything on that moving ballad, which has since been dedicated to the late Dimebag Darrell.

Zakk Wylde

Pride & Glory *GEFFEN, 1994*

Away from Ozzy, Wylde's first studio recordings on his own were worth the wait. Pride & Glory, the short-lived power trio comprising Wylde, James LoMenzo and Brian Tichy, released one album of swampy southern rock brilliance that had more in common with Cream than with the Prince Of Darkness. *Toe'n The Line* is an earthy, electrifying rocker with the sort of burly riffs we'd eventually hear from BLS. *Lovin' Woman* is a mandolin-plucked number with Neil Young vibes, and Tichy sets the blustery *Horse Called War* ablaze with his hyperactive drumming. We're ready for a reunion when you are, guys.

Black Label Society

Grimmest Hits *EONE, 2018*

The band's tenth album isn't actually a greatest-hits record – that rascal Wylde just wanted to confuse people with the title – but there are some all-time great BLS songs here. *Trampled Down Below* is the perfect opener with its bruising haymaker riffs, and *The Betrayal* has a fantastic, Herculean breakdown. But there's much more to *Grimmest Hits*. *The Day That Heaven Had Gone Away* tips its hat to Lynyrd Skynyrd. *A Love Unreal* with its hulking riffs, spectacular lead breaks and melodic drama is a gripping *tour de force* that epitomises everything this band do so well.

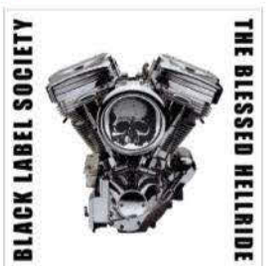
Black Label Society

Stronger Than Death

SPITFIRE, 2000

If you're calling your album *Stronger Than Death*, you really can't fuck around. And BLS's second album does not. Heavier than its predecessor *Sonic Brew*, this was the true introduction of the band's signature metallic crunch. *13 Years Of Grief* drives forward with groovy muscle. Then, just because, Wylde rips a shrieking solo in the middle of delicate piano ballad *Just Killing Time*. Much like Ozzy's *Miracle Man*, the doomy *Counterfeit God* has a thinly veiled pop at televangelism. And yes, *Superterrorizer* is as crushingly awesome as you'd expect.

Good Worth exploring



Black Label Society

The Blessed Hellride

SPITFIRE, 2003

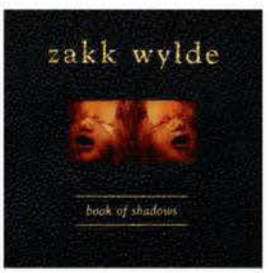
If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That seemed to be the vibe for *The Blessed Hellride*, the fourth Black Label album in as many years. *Funeral Bell,* still a setlist regular, pulsates with quintessential Wylde riffage. *Doomsday Jesus*'s explosive choruses – right where Wylde screams "Ooowwwhhh!" – should erupt from the speakers much more, but *Hellride*'s sonics are a little flat by their standards. So similar in cadence, give yourself a pat on the back if you picked out Ozzy's guest vocals on *Stillborn*, on which Craig Nunenmacher's deft drumming adds even more weight to that iconic scuzzy riff.

Black Label Society

Order Of The Black

EONE/ROADRUNNER/RIOT!, 2010

The parting might have been very amicable, but on *Order Of The Black* it sounds like Wylde had a point to prove after being let go by Ozzy. Not to mention a serious stay in hospital a year prior due to multiple blood clots. With more than a whiff of Pantera, opener *Crazy Horse* is like a gale of juggernaut riffs. *Godspeed Hellbound* has the battering-ram intensity of the band's earliest albums. Among the bonus tracks you'll find a captivating, piano-heavy cover of Sabbath's *Junior's Eyes*. Seemingly reinvigorated, Wylde would continue this rich vein of form for the rest of the decade.



Zakk Wylde

Book Of Shadows *GEFFEN, 1996*

This is the bridge between Pride & Glory and the debut Black Label Society album. *Book Of Shadows*, Wylde's first true solo record, went even deeper into P&G's country, folk and southern-rock soundscapes – *Pride & Glory II: Pride Harder* totally would have worked as its title. These acoustic-style, often dynamic tracks fully unveiled Wylde's songwriting faculties. *Sold My Soul* is rich and cinematic, combining strings and guitars to good effect – but he can't resist a pair of fiery solos at its peak. *Throwin' It All Away* is a hard-hitting song inspired by the late Shannon Hoon of Blind Melon, who died aged 28 from a drug overdose in 1995.

Avoid

Ozzy Osbourne

Black Rain *EPIC, 2007*

Ozzy's first original studio album after *The Osbournes* is almost as bewildering as the hit MTV reality series. The record is listless, lame and over-processed; was that vast mainstream exposure messing with the Ozzy's mojo? *Lay Your World On Me*, a dreadful, woozy ballad, might be the worst song of Ozzy's entire career, and why *The Almighty Dollar* is allowed to lumber along aimlessly for seven minutes is anyone's guess. For his next album, Ozzy replaced Wylde with Gus G of Firewind, saying that his music had started to sound too similar to Black Label Society. But that's is the least of *Black Rain*'s problems.

Essential Playlist

Miracle Man
Ozzy Osbourne

Mama, I'm Coming Home
Ozzy Osbourne

No More Tears
Ozzy Osbourne

Hellraiser
Ozzy Osbourne

Losin' Your Mind
Pride & Glory

Toe'n The Line
Pride & Glory

Perry Mason
Ozzy Osbourne

All For You
Black Label Society

Superterrorizer
Black Label Society

Bleed For Me
Black Label Society

Lords Of Destruction
Black Label Society

Stillborn
Black Label Society

Funeral Bell
Black Label Society

Fire It Up
Black Label Society

Suicide Messiah
Black Label Society

In This River
Black Label Society

Concrete Jungle
Black Label Society

Trampled Down Below
Black Label Society

A Love Unreal
Black Label Society

War Pigs
Zakk Sabbath

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SAT 08 NOV - LIVERPOOL HANGAR 34
THU 13 NOV - LONDON ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY
FRI 14 NOV - COVENTRY WARWICK ARTS CENTRE
SAT 15 NOV - FROME CHEESE & GRAIN
SUN 16 NOV - BRIGHTON CONCORDE 2
THU 20 NOV - GLASGOW ST LUKES
FRI 21 NOV - DUNFERMLINE CARNEGIE HALL
SAT 22 NOV - NEWCASTLE DIGITAL

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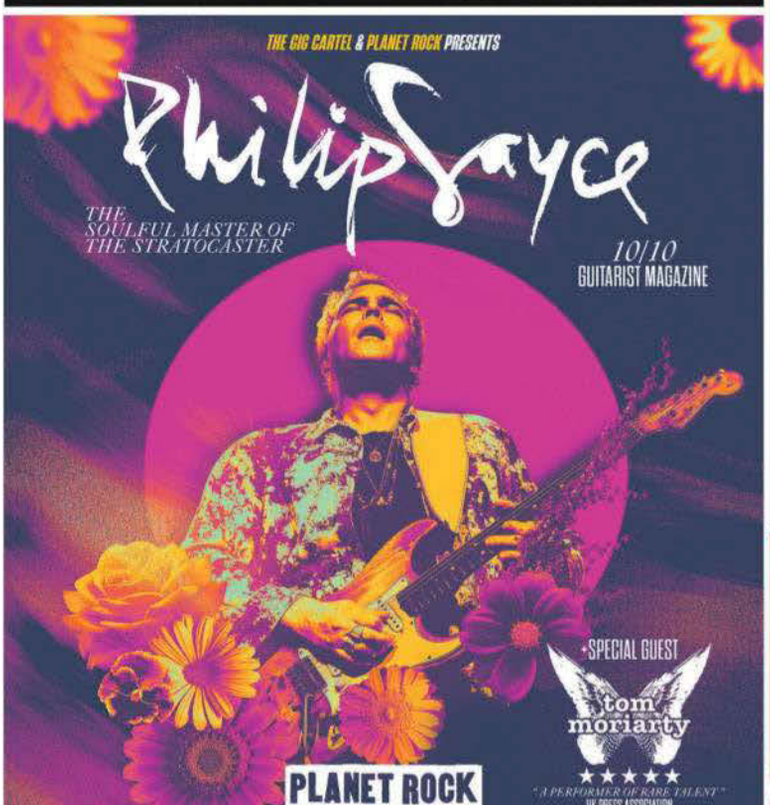

+SPECIAL GUEST tom moriarty

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SAT 31 JAN | HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME

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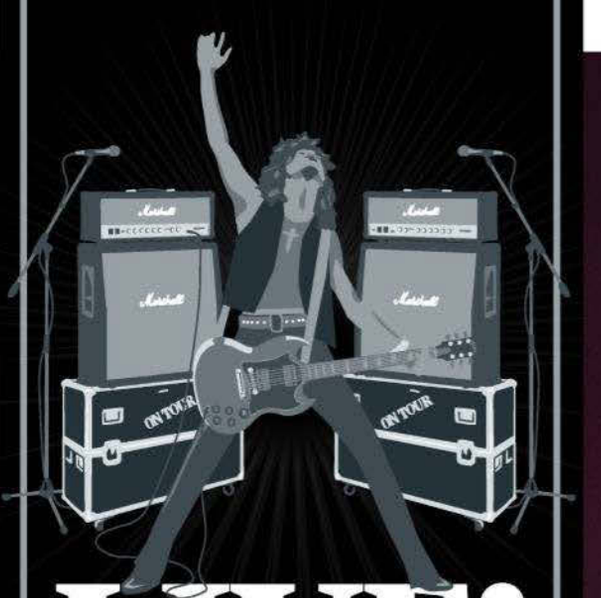

LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

P105
Stonedead Festival
How mighty were headliners The Almighty – and rest of the bill – at this year's annual celebration of classic rock?

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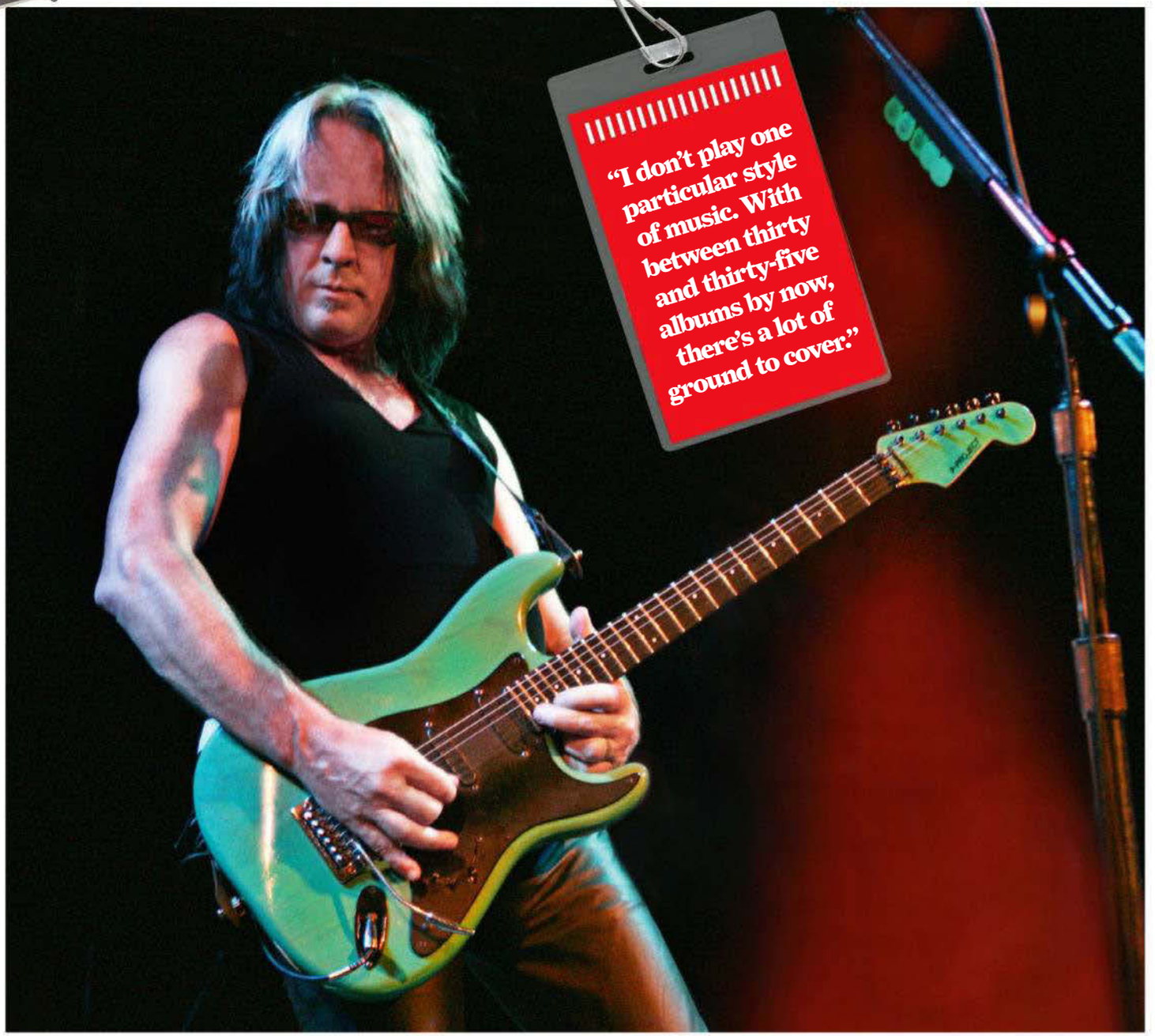
CHRIS SUMBY


"I don't play one particular style of music. With between thirty and thirty-five albums by now, there's a lot of ground to cover."

Todd Rundgren

Expect the expected and the unexpected at the stylistically unbound musical polymath's shows.

As his latest tour titled Me/We continues, the iconic singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, producer and industry maverick previews three rare British shows, at the Sub Rooms in Stroud, The Alexandra in Birmingham and the Palladium in London.

Two summers ago you played London's Hammersmith Apollo on a bill with the newly solo Daryl Hall. Was that a good combination?
Yeah. Even before getting to London I had done quite a few months of touring with Daryl in a stint that also took us to Asia. Afterwards I think Elvis Costello took over as Daryl's opener.

Were the two of you a match stylistically, though?
Oh yeah, we're both Philly [Philadelphia-born] guys and we grew up listening to the same kind of music. I produced one of the early Hall & Oates albums [1974's *War Babies*, on which he also played guitar], so there's a long association.

This time, presumably there's nobody else on the bill so audiences with be getting a nice long set.
Yeah, for sure. Normally we play for around two hours. Because the show is stretched so long, we don't usually have an opening act. Also, I'm not a 'genre artist' – I don't play one particular style of music. With between thirty and thirty-five albums by now, there's a lot of ground to cover.

Can you give any hints as to some of the songs you'll be playing?
I'm sure it will have been published somewhere [on the internet]. It usually is. We did this tour [Me/We] last year, and because I didn't come up with any new music in the interim and there isn't a new album to promote it hasn't changed a great deal.

I still sing about the world, you know... how we relate to each other, and things have changed so much within a year. Me and my fans – the people that come to the shows – we need each other even more now than ever.

In the wake of last year's US election, you are urging us to be the best version of ourselves, also to refrain from fighting hate with hate.
[Nodding enthusiastically] Yes, but it's very difficult. These are dark times and so many evil people occupy high places. That presents so many

dark thoughts. You ask: How do we get through this? The only way is to depend on each other and assume we have good intentions. I try to think of [the situation] as a mistake. I don't like thinking that the people that have become leaders represent us from a moral standpoint. Let's stand up for the things we believe in, despite the fact we have lost control of the narrative.

On a lighter note, have you ever played at the London Palladium before?
I don't believe I have, though I did play Hammersmith, which was then the Odeon and now the Apollo. I even played Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club. I've played most places around town, though I'm yet to play the Royal Albert Hall, I know that.

But you are familiar with the Palladium's reputation.
I've walked past several times but never been inside. I believe it's more of a place of traditional music hall and light entertainment than a regular concert hall, and I prefer those to the usual sheds.

As someone who has predicted so many things, including the rise of the internet, how do you feel about the long-term future of rock music? Has it even got one?
I am amazed that people still use that term. It's become a sub-genre. You can't say that anything Taylor Swift does is rock, even though she is the highest paid artist in the world. A lot of it [the decline of the genre] has to do with changes in the market. Guys – a traditional target of rock – now spend their money on videogames instead, and the female audience is now the largest for music. We have some serious female rockers, but Joan Jett doesn't dominate the music scene. Now it's about Lady Gaga and Taylor Swift. Female artists are filling arenas and stadiums.

It doesn't help that the Black Sabbaths of this world are dying out.
That's also a big part of what's happening. There was an era when male musicians of that era were ubiquitous. Now they're kind of hard to find. [What they did] has now become a niche, almost. The whole nature of music is that it gets replaced. It's pretty amazing that rock lasted for seventy-five years.

It's almost three years since you released your last album, *Space Force*. Do you still believe in the concept of the full-length record?
I do. The problem is that listeners don't any more [laughs]. Nobody puts aside forty minutes of their day to sit down and listen to a whole record any more. But I don't care, I'm going to keep making them anyway. I start a new record as soon as I finish this tour.

Having accomplished so much in your 58-year career, what still remains for you in terms of unticked boxes?
I did harbour an ambition to become an actor, but I realised I'm very happy with where I'm at. I'm having too much fun being me, why pretend to be someone else? **DL**

Todd's UK shows are in Stroud on October 27, Birmingham 28 and London 29.

JEFF HAHNE/GETTY IMAGES

Coheed And Cambria

The self-described "slightly bizarre band" tour in October.

Back in March, the New Yorkers released a tenth studio album, titled *Vaxis – Act III: The Father Of Make Believe*. Vocalist, guitarist, primary lyricist and driving force Claudio Sanchez previews five British appearances that follow a headline spot at the 2000trees Festival in July.

How did you enjoy playing at 2000trees?
It was nice to co-headline a festival. It isn't something we get to do a lot. With the concept [CAC's lyrics are predominantly based on Sanchez's sci-fi saga *The Amory Wars*] we are a slightly bizarre band. But put us in front of a sea of people and we really surprise them – in a good way [laughs].

In *Classic Rock*, *Vaxis – Act III* was described as a "remarkable evolutionary step forward". Were you pleased with the overall response?
That's generally true of all our albums, but yeah. This has been a real rebirth for the band. I wish I had been mature enough to be open about the origins of the story twenty years ago and explain how it connects to myself and my experiences, but back then I was just too introverted and shy. I really didn't know how to communicate.

Our reviewer noted the more personal nature of its songs, suggesting that it may have been inspired by a midlife crisis.
I'm in my late forties and I've watched family members pass away. I'm starting to realise the end might be just around the corner. I began considering what would happen to my wife Sandra if I passed away, or the other way around. The realisation that life is not for ever made me very sad.

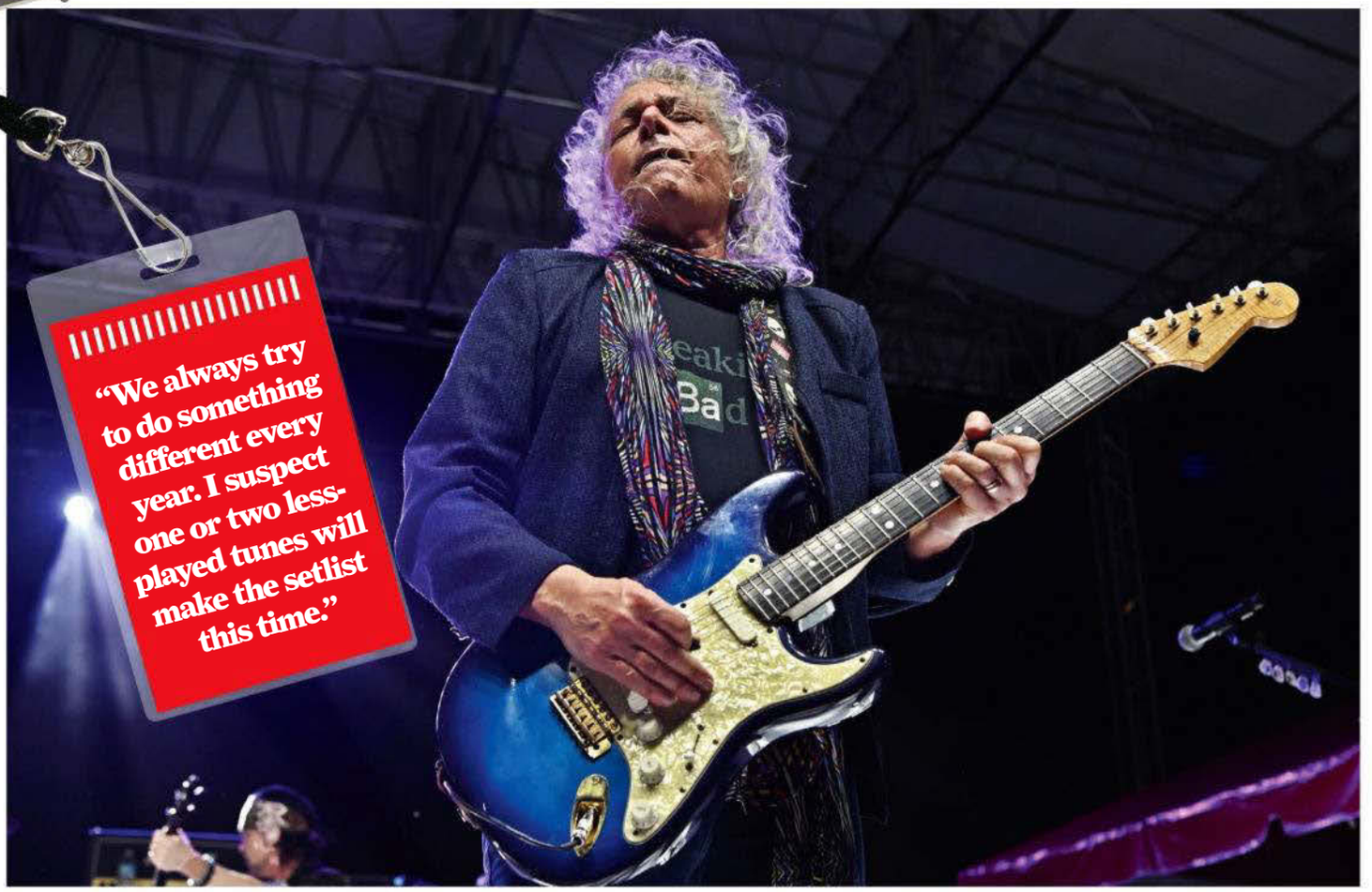
Ten years ago, you broke away from *The Amory Wars* for *The Color Before The Sun*. Do you pine for another slice of that liberation, or is working within a framework something that you relish?
It's a little of both. With these [conceptual] records I still get to express myself personally. The problem about making those records is the time they take to put together. *Vaxis – Act III* was finished a year before it was released. But what people don't consider is the work that goes into it, things like the construction of the packaging. My wife and I also write and illustrate the story that accompanies it. I would have a bit more of a life if I put all of that aside.

Stylistically speaking, Coheed have always been tough to tie down. Does the term 'prog' get used about the band in lieu of a more suitable alternative?
You're right. There are some prog tendencies in what our band does, but it isn't everything. I like all sorts of music, and so does everyone in Coheed. We're about music, not genres.

Will the three *Vaxis* albums provide most of the music for these UK dates?
Yes and no. It's tough for us. A good forty-to-fifty per cent of what we play will be from *Vaxis*, but everyone wants to hear songs like *Welcome Home* [which dates back to 2005] and it's hard to deny that.

UK band Haken are your special guests. Are you familiar with those guys?
I'll be honest, I know very little about Haken. They were brought to us by our manager. I've listened to them a bit and they seem like a band that probably has to be seen live, which is also kind of true of Coheed. So in that sense we will probably be very compatible. **DL**

The tour runs from October 17 to 22.



Y&T

If it's classic hard rock that flicks your switch, here's a band to flick it for you.

Formed as Yesterday & Today back in 1974, California band Y&T long ago set the benchmark for mixing power with melody, which they topped with the vocal class of guitarist Dave Meniketti. Now their final surviving original member, Meniketti is looking forward to the band's latest British tour.

This will be Y&T's second UK tour since you received the all-clear for testicular cancer.
Everything's been back to normal for a couple of years now. I got it treated really early and there's a very good prognosis for that.

Want to remind *Classic Rock*'s male readers, many of whom are of a certain age, to undergo regular checks?
Absolutely. I'm talking as a public service here. Gentlemen, when getting annual health checks please make sure it includes your prostate. Getting the right treatment early enough will give you a ninety per cent chance of survival, just like I did.

On last year's fiftieth anniversary tour Y&T played at least one song from each of their dozen studio albums. How is this latest tour being structured in terms of the setlist?
We always try to do something different every year. But having said that, there was something cool about including those early tunes, and I'm still not sure whether we will get rid of them. I suspect one or two less-played tunes will make the setlist this time.

On stage in London, introducing *Long Way Down*, from 1995's *Musically Incorrect*, you explained how that particular decade was "a little dicey for us". But Y&T were one of the groups that didn't go grunge or, worse, retired.
I'm very proud of that. Some of our contemporaries did adopt a grungier style, but that wasn't where we were coming from. There was a very short-lived retirement for Y&T, but ultimately, regardless of how the business developed, it was hard to give up something that really worked.

Does it weigh heavy on your mind that you are the last surviving member of Y&T's original line-up?
It certainly *did*, no question. Phil Kennemore [bassist, who passed in 2011] was my best bud, and in our minds we were going to take this band on till the end of time. But of course it doesn't work out like that. The passing of Joey [Alves, rhythm guitarist, in 2017] and Leonard [Haze, drums, in 2016] both hit me really hard. But after a while I choose to focus instead on the incredible memories I have of putting together this band as a bunch of young kids. It makes me all the more determined to keep it going.

At seventy-one your singing voice is still in great shape. Got any tips?
I try to take care of myself. I don't smoke. I eat sensibly and ensure that I get plenty of sleep. I don't drink alcohol on show days. I can only guess that maybe it's genetic?

We are talking days after the sad death of Ozzy Osbourne, with whom Y&T toured in 1983. You once told *Classic Rock* that in Dublin, in front of your entire band, Ozzy got down his knees and pleaded: "David, would you please join my band?" then kissed you on the lips.
[Laughs] That's completely true. Ozzy was the sweetest guy. He loved to be a joker. I love that he got to do what he wanted to do [with Black Sabbath at Villa Park] before he passed.

Any regrets in turning down his proposal?
None at all. It would have made my life different, but I'm not sure I could have been the flashy guitarist that he wanted me to be.

Given that your last album, *Facemelter*, is now fifteen years old, is it safe to assume that there will never be another studio album from Y&T?
It [making a new record] is always in the back of my mind, but right now it isn't a priority. **DL**

Y&T's UK tour runs from October 15 to 25.

LARRY MARANO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Tour Dates

BRYAN ADAMS

Hull	Connexin Live	Dec 8
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Dec 9
Brighton	Centre	Dec 10

THE ALMIGHTY, WOLFSBANE

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 22
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 29
Barrowland	Ballroom	Nov 30

ARCH ENEMY, AMORPHIS, ELUVEITIE, GATECREEPER

Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Oct 30
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 31
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 1

ASIA FEATURING JOHN PAYNE, FOGHAT

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 16

KRIS BARRAS' HOLLOW SOULS

Bedford	Esquires	Oct 16
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Oct 17
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 18
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Oct 19
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts	Oct 22
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 23
Leek	Foxlowe Arts	Oct 24
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 25
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Oct 26
Grimsby	Docks Academy	Oct 29
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 30
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	Oct 31
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Nov 1
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 2
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 4
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Nov 5
York	Crescent	Nov 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 7
Southampton	Suburbia	Nov 8
Tavistock	The Wharf	Nov 9

BATTLE BEAST, DOMINIUM, MAJESTICA

Birmingham	Institute	Oct 21
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 22
Bristol	Academy	Oct 23
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 24

BLAZE BAYLEY

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 1

THE BLACK EYED SONS

Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 6
Bridgewater	Cobblestones	Nov 8
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 12
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 13
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 17
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Dec 18
Crumlin	The Patriot	Dec 19
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 20

BETH BLADE & THE FABULOUS DISASTERS

Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 10
Lancaster	The Pub	Oct 11
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Oct 18
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Oct 24

BOBBIE DAZZLE

London	Denmark Street Lower Third	Oct 24
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Oct 29
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Oct 30

GRAHAM BONNET BAND

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 22
Glasgow	Slay	Oct 23
Wakefield	Venue 23	Oct 24
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 25
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 26
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 29
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 30
Plymouth	Quad Theatre	Oct 31
Bristol	Lost Horizon	Nov 1
Southampton	1865	Nov 2

BRAVE RIVAL

Godalming	Borough Hall	Oct 11
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Oct 12
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 15
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 16
Aldershot	West End Centre	Oct 18
Hartlepool	Hallelujah Festival	Oct 25
Lincoln	Drill Hall	Oct 26
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 6
Whitby	Rocks	Nov 7
Looe	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Dec 5
Bristol	Louisiana	Dec 6
Staines	Thameside Brewery	Dec 7
Dudley	Lamp Tavern	Nov 8
Looe	Blues Rhythm & Rock Festival	Dec 5
Bristol	Louisiana	Dec 6
Staines	Thameside Taphouse	Dec 7
Leighton Buzzard	Library Theatre	Dec 18
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Dec 19
Hastings	The Carlisle	Dec 21

BRITISH LION

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 28
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 29
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Nov 30
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 2
Manchester	Gorilla	Dec 3
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Dec 4
Isle Of Wight	Strings Bar & Venue	Dec 6
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Dec 7
Frome	Cheese And Grain	Dec 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 10
Colchester	Arts Centre	Dec 11
Gravesend	Red Lion	Dec 12
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 13
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Dec 15-19

BYWATER CALL, DAN PATLANSKY

London	Highbury Garage	Nov 19
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Nov 20
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 21
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Nov 22
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 23
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 25
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 26
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 28

CARDINAL BLACK

Belfast	Limelight	Oct 10
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 16
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 17
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Oct 19
Bristol	SWX	Oct 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 24
Brighton	Concorde 2	Oct 28
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 29
London	Camden Koko	Oct 30

CATS IN SPACE, EMPYRE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	Oct 12
Glasgow	Cottiers Theatre	Oct 14
Hexham	Queens Hall	Oct 15
Stockport	The Forum	Oct 16
Bath	Komedia	Oct 21
Bromsgrove	The Artrix	Oct 22

CATS IN SPACE, ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Bath	Komedia	Oct 21

CLUTCH

Bristol	Beacon	Dec 15
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 17
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 18
Manchester	Academy	Dec 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 20

COHEED AND CAMBRIA, HAKEN

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 17
Cardiff	University Great Hall	Oct 18
Manchester	Academy	Oct 19
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 21

STEWART COPELAND – HAVE I SAID TOO MUCH?

Ringwood	The Barn	Oct 10
Hertford	Theatre	Oct 11
Newark	Palace Theatre	Oct 12
Bristol	St George's Hall	Oct 15
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 16
Newport	Riverfront	Oct 17
Barry	Memo Arts	Oct 18
Bridgwater	McMillan	Oct 19

COUNTING CROWS

Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 23
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 24
Leeds	Academy	Oct 26
Edinburgh	Academy	Oct 27
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Oct 29
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 31
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 1

DARE, CHANTEL McGREGOR

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 14

DEF LEPPARD, EXTREME

Belfast	Belsonic	Jun 26
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 28

DEF LEPPARD

Wanna get rocked? Of course you do. And with the Leps involved, you will be. Extreme supporting too? It'll be a good 'un.

See below for dates. Currently June 26 to July 6.

Sheffield	Utilita Arena	Jun 30
London	O2 Arena	Jul 2
Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	Jul 04
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 6

DEFTONES, DENZEL CURRY, DRUG CHURCH

Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	Feb 12
Glasgow	The Hydro	Feb 13
Manchester	Co-op Live	Feb 14
Dublin	3 Arena	Feb 16
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Feb 18
London	O2 Arena	Feb 20

DEWOLFF

Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 10
Carlisle	Blues Festival	Oct 11
Liverpool	The District	Oct 12
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 14
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 15
Brighton	Patterns	Oct 16

DIM GRAY, TIGER MOTH TALES

Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 7
London	Camden Club	Nov 9

DISTURBED, MEGADETH

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 20
Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 22
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 24
London	O2 Arena	Oct 26
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 28

Recommended

WILLIE DOWLING & THE INVISIBLE BAND

London	West Hampstead Arts Club	Oct 23
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 24
Manchester	Copper Bar	Nov 2

FEEDER

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 11

FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 26
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 30
Whitby	Tomorrows Ghosts Festival	Oct 31
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 1

FOCUS

London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Nov 2
Worthing	Factory	Nov 4
Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 6
Southport	Atkinson	Nov 7
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 8, 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 10
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Nov 11
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Nov 12
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Nov 13
Southampton	1865	Nov 20
Chichester	Council House	Nov 21
Wimborne	Tivoli	Nov 22
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Nov 24
Lowdham	Village Hall	Nov 25
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 26
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Nov 27
Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 28
Aldershot	West End Centre	Nov 30

FOGHAT

Great Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 15
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 16
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 18

ROBBEN FORD

Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Nov 25
Bath	Komedia	Nov 26
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 27
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Jan 14, 15

FOREIGNER

Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 18
London	Wembley Arena	Jun 19

GONG, HENGE

Southampton	1865	Nov 5
Bristol	Trinity Centre	Nov 6
Margate	Dreamland	Nov 7
Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 9
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 11
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 12
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 13
Sheffield	Crokes Social Club	Nov 19
Leeds	Irish Centre	Nov 20
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 21
Lancaster	Kanteena	Nov 22
Glasgow	St Luke's	Nov 23
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 26
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 27
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 28
London	Hackey Earth	Nov 30

HALESTORM, BLOODYWOOD, KELSY KARTER & THE HEROINES

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 21
Birmingham	bp pulse LIVE	Nov 23
Manchester	Arena	Nov 24
London	O2 Arena	Nov 26

HAWKLORDS

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 30
Hastings	The Carlisle	Oct 31
Coventry	The Arches	Nov 1
Hitchin	Club 85	Nov 2
Southampton	1865	Nov 4
Bridgwater	The Cobblestones	Nov 5
Chelmsford	Hot Box	Nov 6
Nottingham	Rose Of England	Nov 8
Worcester	Marrs Bar	Nov 9
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 11
Great Yarmouth	HRH Prog	Nov 13
Cambridge	66 Bar	Nov 14
Hull	New Adelphi	Nov 16
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 17
Glasgow	Audio	Nov 18
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 19
Skipton	Sound Bar	Nov 20
Norwich	Brickmakers	Nov 21

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Cardiff	New Theatre	Oct 19
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Oct 20
Weston-Super-Mare	Playhouse	Oct 21

KATJA OGRIN/GETTY IMAGES

LIVE!

Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Oct 23
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 24
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Oct 25
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Oct 27
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Oct 28
Swindon	Wyvern	Oct 30
London	Cadogan Hall	Oct 31
Brighton	Theatre Royal	Nov 2
Birmingham	Town Hall	Nov 3

HELLOWEEN, BEAST IN BLACK

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 25

HIGH ON FIRE

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 6
Manchester	Damnation Festival	Nov 8

THE HIVES

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 24
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 25
Manchester	Aviva Studios	Nov 28
London	Alexandra Palace	Nov 29

CHRIS HOLMES: THE SOUND OF W.A.S.P.

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 15
Wakefield	Venue 23	Oct 18
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 19
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 22
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 23
Stockport	Holy Diver	Oct 24
Cannock	The Station	Oct 26
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 6
Crumlin	The Patriot	Nov 7
Swansea	Hagar 18	Nov 8

THE HOT DAMN!

Leeds	Key Club	Oct 10
Cambridge	Mash Club	Oct 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 12

GLENN HUGHES, SOPHIE LLOYD

Bristol	Academy	Oct 14
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 24
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 25

JACK J HUTCHINSON

London	Camden Black Heart	Oct 10
Carlisle	Blues Rhythm & Rock Festival	Oct 11
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 12
Manchester	Night & Day Café	Oct 13
Newark	Flying Circus	Oct 17

LAURENCE JONES

Blackpool Waterloo	FY4	Oct 16
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 17
Leicester	International Arts	Nov 2
Northampton	Black Prince	Dec 12

THE KARMA EFFECT, BIG RIVER

Hastings	The Carlisle	Oct 10

KATATONIA, EVERGREY, KLOGR

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Dec 5
Glasgow	Garage	Dec 6
Manchester	Academy 2	Dec 7
Bristol	SWK	Dec 8

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, HATEBREED, FIT FOR AN AUTOPSY, DECAPITATED

Newcastle	NX	Oct 11
Cardiff	Depot	Oct 12
Leeds	Academy	Oct 13
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 15
London	Wembley Arena	Oct 17
Belfast	Telegraph Building	Oct 19
Dublin	National Stadium	Oct 20

KING KING, LAURA EVANS

Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 10
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 11
Bath	Komedia	Oct 12
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 14
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 15
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 16
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 18
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 19
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Oct 21
Stockton On Tees	Arc	Oct 22
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 31
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 2

JIM KIRKPATRICK BAND

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 9
London	Rayes Park Cavern	Nov 12
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Nov 16
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Nov 17

LACUNA COIL, NONPOINT

Southampton	1865	Nov 22
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 23
Leeds	Stylus	Nov 25
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 26
Cardiff	Tramshed	Nov 28
Brighton	Chalk	Nov 29

LARKIN POE

Manchester	Academy	Oct 17
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 18
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 19
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 21
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 22

TOBY LEE

Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 22
Bury	The Met	Oct 23
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Oct 29
Bedford	Esquires	Oct 30
Leek	Foxgloves Arts	Oct 31
York	The Crescent	Nov 12
Galashiels	Mac Arts	Nov 13
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Nov 14
Grimsby	Docks Academy	Nov 15

TILL LINDEMANN, AESTHETIC PERFECTION

London	Arena Wembley Arena	Nov 4

LORD OF THE LOST

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 31
Whitby	All Tomorrows Ghosts Festival	Nov 1
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 2
Belfast	Limelight 1	Nov 4
Dublin	Academy	Nov 5
Bristol	Prospect Building	Nov 7
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 8
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 9

MASON HILL

London	Camden Assembly	Nov 27
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 29

MIDNITE CITY, WILDSTREET

Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 26
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Nov 27
London	Camden Black Heart	Nov 28
Nottingham	Billy Bootleggers	Nov 29
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 30

MY BLOODY VALENTINE

Manchester	Aviva Studios	Nov 24
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 27

GRAHAM NASH

Bristol	Beacon	Oct 10
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Oct 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 13
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 15
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 6
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Oct 18
London	Palladium	Oct 19

NEW FOUND GLORY, REAL FRIENDS, KOYO

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 10
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Oct 11
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 12
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 15
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 17
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 18

THE OBSESSED, FAMYNE, IRON VOID

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 23

THE OFFSPRING

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 10
London	O2 Arena	Nov 14
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Nov 15
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 18

ORANGE GOBLIN, GRAND MAGUS, URNE

Glasgow	Garage	Dec 10
Dublin	Button Factory	Dec 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 12
Manchester	Academy 2	Dec 13
Bristol	SWX	Dec 14
Southampton	1865	Dec 16
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 17

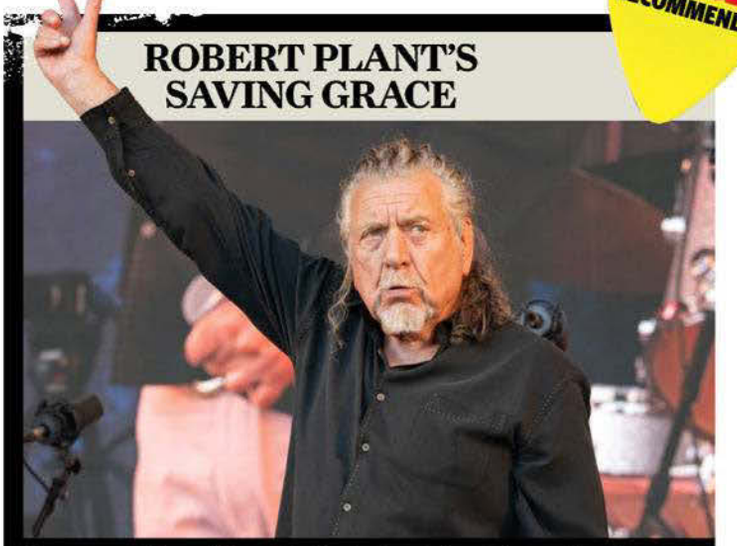
PENDULUM

Edinburgh	Corn Exchange	Nov 1
Bristol	Prospect Building	Nov 3
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 4
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 6
Manchester	Depot Mayfield	Nov 9

ROBERT PLANT'S SAVING GRACE

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Dec 8
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Dec 9
London	Royal Festival Hall	Dec 11
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Dec 14
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 15
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Dec 17

ROBERT PLANT'S SAVING GRACE



Never standing still musically, Robert Plant's latest low-key, acoustic-leaning collective are definitely worth catching.

See below for dates. Currently December 8 to December 23.

Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Dec 18
Middlesbrough	Town Hall	Dec 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 22
York	Barbican	Dec 23

POWERWOLF, HAMMERFALL, WIND ROSE

London	Wembley Arena	Mar 7

PRAYING MANTIS, GYPSY'S KISS

Bedford	Esquires	Oct 17
Worthing	The Factory	Oct 18
London	Raynes Park The Cavern	Oct 19

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS, ANJA HUWE

Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Oct 22
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 24
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 25
Manchester	Albert Hall	Oct 27
Bristol	Academy	Oct 28
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 30
London	Palladium	Oct 31

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London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 27
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 28
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Dec 29
Swindon	MECA	Jan 3
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Jan 4
Cambridge	Junction	Jan 6
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Jan 7
Coventry	Empire	Jan 10

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 29

THE QUIREBOYS, SOHO DUKES

Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Nov 27
Wakefield	Venue 23	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 29
Nottingham	Saltbox	Nov 30
Newcastle	Digital	Dec 3
Glasgow	Classic Grand Ballroom	Dec 4
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Dec 5

RADIOHEAD

London	O2 Arena	Nov 21, 22, 24, 25

RAGING SPEEDHORN, MASTIFF

Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 20
Bournemouth	The Anvil	Nov 22
London	Camden Black Heart	Nov 22, 23
Manchester	Star & Garter	Nov 28
Edinburgh	Mash House	Nov 29
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 30

THE RASMUS

Glasgow	Galvanizers	Nov 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 1
Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 4
Southampton	1865	Dec 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 6

THE RAVEN AGE, EMPYRE

Southampton	1865	Nov 25
Leicester	Academy 2	Nov 26
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 27
Manchester	Club Academy	Nov 28
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 30

REEF, KERBDOG

Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 16
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 17
Norwich	UEA	Oct 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 23
Bristol	Academy	Oct 24
Southampton	1865	Oct 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 30
Liverpool	Academy	Oct 31
Tenby	De Valence Pavilion	Nov 1
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 2
Leeds	Academy	Nov 6
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 7
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 8

THORBJØRN RISAGER & THE BLACK TORNADO

London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Jan 11

AN EVENING WITH FRANCIS ROSSI

Bridlington	Spa	Oct 11
Manchester	RNCM	Oct 12
New Brighton	Floral Theatre	Oct 14
Dunfermline	Alhambra	Oct 15
York	Barbican	Oct 16
Sunderland	Fire Station	Oct 18
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 28
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 29
Aldershot	Prince's Hall	Oct 31
Dunstable	Grove Theatre	Nov 1
Runcorn	Brindley Theatre	Nov 3
Hereford	Courtyard	Nov 4
Sheffield	Memorial Hall	Nov 5
Bath	Forum	Nov 7
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Nov 8

ROYAL REPUBLIC

Leeds	Stylus	Nov 7
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 9
Bristol	Electric	Feb 12
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 13
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 14

TODD RUNDGREN

Stroud	Sub Rooms	Oct 27
Birmingham	The Alexandra	Oct 28
London	Palladium	Oct 29

Recommended

SAXON, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 4
Dublin	Olympia	Nov 5
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 7
Sheffield	Octagon	Nov 8
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 9
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 11
Bristol	Beacon	Nov 13
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 14
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 15
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 16

SKINDRED, THE DETOUR

Keele	University	Oct 16
Tenby	De Valence Pavilion	Oct 17
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 18

STEVE THORNE/REDFERNS

Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 23
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 24
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Oct 25
Warrington	Parr Hall	Oct 30
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 31
Middlesbrough	Town Hall	Nov 1
Wakefield	Venue 23	Nov 2
Torquay	Arena	Nov 7
Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 8
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Nov 14

DAVE HILL'S SLADE, SONS OF THE SEVENTIES

Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Nov 28
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 10
Liverpool	Academy	Dec 12
Bournemouth	Academy	Dec 14
Oxford	Academy	Dec 16
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 17
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 19
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 20
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 22

PATTI SMITH

Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 6
London	Palladium	Oct 12, 13

AL STEWART

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 10
Guildford	G Live	Oct 11
Birmingham	Alexandra	Oct 12
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 15
London	Palladium	Oct 15

ROINE STOLT & FRIENDS PLAY THE FLOWER KINGS

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 9
Manchester	Club Academy	Dec 10

THE STRANGLERS, BUZZCOCKS

Leeds	Academy	Oct 17
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 18
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 21
Edinburgh	Academy	Oct 23
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Oct 24
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 28
Brighton	Dome	Oct 29
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 31, Nov 1

STRAY, GYPSY'S KISS

Hastings	The Carlisle	Nov 28

SWANS

Leeds	Project House	Nov 7
London	Brixton Electric	Nov 9, 10

SWEET

Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 4
Torquay	Arena	Dec 5
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 6
Northampton	Roadmender	Dec 11
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Dec 12
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 15
Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Dec 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 18
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Dec 19
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Dec 20

SYSTEM OF A DOWN, QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, ACID BATH

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jul 13

TEN

Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 25
Newport	The Patriot	Nov 8
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Nov 15
Layton	Institute	Nov 22

TEN YEARS AFTER, JOHN VERITY

London	Gr Portland St 229 Club	Jan 21

TESTAMENT, OBITUARY

Manchester	Academy	Oct 10
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 11

THESE WICKED RIVERS, VIRGINMARYS

Newport	The Patriot	Nov 15
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 15
Cambridge	Storey's Field Centre	Nov 20
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Nov 21
Cheltenham	Steam & Whistle	Nov 22
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 23
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 28
Hull	The Welly	Nov 29
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 30

THOSE DAMN CROWS

Leicester	Academy	Oct 17
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 18
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 21
Manchester	Albert Hall	Oct 22
Bristol	Crane	Oct 24
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 26
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 28
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 30
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 31

THREE DAYS GRACE

Birmingham	Academy	Dec 9
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 10
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 12
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 13

MIKE TRAMP'S WHITE LION

London	Camden Underworld	Nov 5
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hall	Nov 7
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 8
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 10

TYLA'S DOGS D'AMOUR

Crumlin	The Patriot	Sep 19
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 3
Preston	Vinyl Tap	Oct 4
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Nov 13
Gravesend	Red Lion	Nov 14
St Leonards-on-Sea	The Piper	Nov 15

THE UTOPIA STRONG

Bristol	The Cube	Oct 10
Glastonbury	King Arthur	Oct 11
Guildford	Boileroom	Oct 14
St Albans	The Horn	Oct 15
London	Dalston Cafe Oto	Oct 16
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Oct 17
Ramsgate	Music Hall	Oct 18
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Oct 19
Sheffield	Sidney & Matilda	Oct 21
Edinburgh	Sneaky Pete's	Oct 22
Hexham	Allendale Village Hall	Oct 23
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Oct 24

ALLY VENABLE

Manchester	Night & Day Café	Oct 14
Edinburgh	La Belle Angelle	Oct 15
Nottingham	Bodega	Oct 16
London	Highbury Garage	Oct 17
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Oct 18

THE VINTAGE CARAVAN

Margate	Rock Festival	Oct 25
London	Camden Assembly	Oct 26
Brighton	Dust	Oct 27
Southampton	1865	Oct 28
Bristol	The Exchange	Oct 29
Birmingham	Mama Roux	Oct 30
Newcastle	Think Tank	Oct 31
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Nov 1

Recommended
VOLBEAT, BUSH, GEL
Nottingham Motorpoint Arena Nov 5
Cardiff Utilita Arena Nov 6
Manchester AO Arena Nov 8
Glasgow Hydro Nov 10
Birmingham Utilita Arena Nov 12
London Wembley Arena Nov 13
TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

RICK WAKEMAN: RETURN OF THE CAPED CRUSADER

Aylesbury	Waterside Arts	Oct 12
York	Barbican	Oct 14
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 15
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 16
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 18
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 19
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 21
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 22
Northampton	Royal & Derngate	Oct 23
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Oct 24
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 25
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Oct 26
London	Palladium	Oct 28
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 29

W.A.S.P.

Newcastle	City Hall	Sep 26
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Sep 27
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 28

WEDNESDAY 13

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 4
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 5
Leeds	Warehouse	Nov 6
Newcastle	Digital	Nov 7
Glasgow	Slay	Nov 8
Hull	Asylum	Nov 9

WHEATUS

Dublin	Academy	Nov 22
Belfast	Limelight	Nov 23
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 25
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 26
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 28
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 29
Leicester	Academy 2	Nov 30

KEVIN NIXON

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS
SYSTEM OF A DOWN
Expect the hard-hitting American metallers to hit the back of the net at Spurs' stadium. Support QOTSA will score too.
London Tottenham Hotspur Stadium Jul 13

Sheffield	Leadmill	Dec 1
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Dec 2, 3
Oxford	Academy	Dec 5
Brighton	Chalk	Dec 6
Southampton	1865	Dec 7
Norwich	Epic Studios	Dec 9
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 10
Bristol	Electric	Dec 11
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 12
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 13

WHEN RIVERS MEET, GEORGIA NEVADA

Galashiels	Mac Arts	Oct 24
Inverness	An Seomar	Oct 25
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 26
Southport	The Atkinson	Oct 31
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 1
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 6
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Nov 7
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Nov 8
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 9
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 21
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 22
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 27
Bury St Emunds	Apex	Nov 28

THE WILDHEARTS

Chester	Live Rooms	Dec 4
Preston	Blitz	Dec 5
Pontypridd	Muni Arts Centre	Dec 6
Torquay	Arena	Dec 7
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 9
Brighton	Chalk	Dec 10
London	Islington Academy	Dec 11
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 14
Newcastle	NX	Dec 16

Y&T

Glasgow	Garage	Oct 15
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Oct 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 18
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 19
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 21
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 22
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 24
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 25

YOUNG GUN SILVER FOX

Worthing	Factory Live	Nov 6
Margate	Olbys	Nov 7
Southampton	Papillon	Nov 8

Festivals

ALTER BRIDGE'S BLACKBIRD FESTIVAL
ALTER BRIDGE, SKINDRED, FLORENCE BLACK, CARDINAL BLACK

Cardiff	Castle	Jun 27

BLOODSTOCK
JUDAS PRIEST, LAMB OF GOD, SLAUGHTER TO PREVAIL, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 6-9

BLOODSTOCK'S WINTER GATHERING
CANDLEMASS, VENOM INC, RAISED BY OWLS, MORE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 6

CARLISLE BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
JO HARMAN, KYLA BROX, HAMILTON LOOMIS, MORE

Carlisle	Crown & Mitre Hotel	Oct 10-12

DAMNATION
THE HAUNTED, PIG DESTROYER, WORMROT, MORE

Manchester	BEC Arena	Nov 8, 9

DEDICATION TO PHIL LYNOTT
ERIC BELL, DARREN WHARTON, RICKY WARWICK, GRAND SLAM, MORE

Dublin	3 Arena	Jan 4

DESERTFEST
GREEN LUNG, THE SWORD, CAPRICORNS, MORE

London	Camden various venues	May 15-17

FIREVOLT
RICKY WARWICKI, DARE, CATS IN SPACE, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 7-9

HARD ROCK HELL
ROYAL REPUBLIC, STEELHEART, APRIL WINE, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 6-9

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
ASIA FEATURING JOHN PAYNE, FOGHAT, FOCUS, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 13-16

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE
BULLETBOYS, ENUFF Z'NUFF, LOVE/HATE, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Sep 4-6

MILKFEST
CHRIS DIFFORD, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, BRAVE RIVAL, MORE

London	Indig02	Mar 1

ROXOFF
WOLFSBANE, MARISSA & THE MOTHS, JULIET'S NOT DEAD, MORE

Norwich	Waterfront Studios	May 3

TOMORROW'S GHOSTS
FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM, LORD OF THE LOST, BALAAM & THE ANGEL, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 31, Nov 1

WHITBY BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK
JO HARMAN, THOMAS HEPPELL, JERRY JABLONSKI, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 8

WINTERSTORM
BRITISH LION, UGLY KID JOE, MORE

Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 27-29

Suede

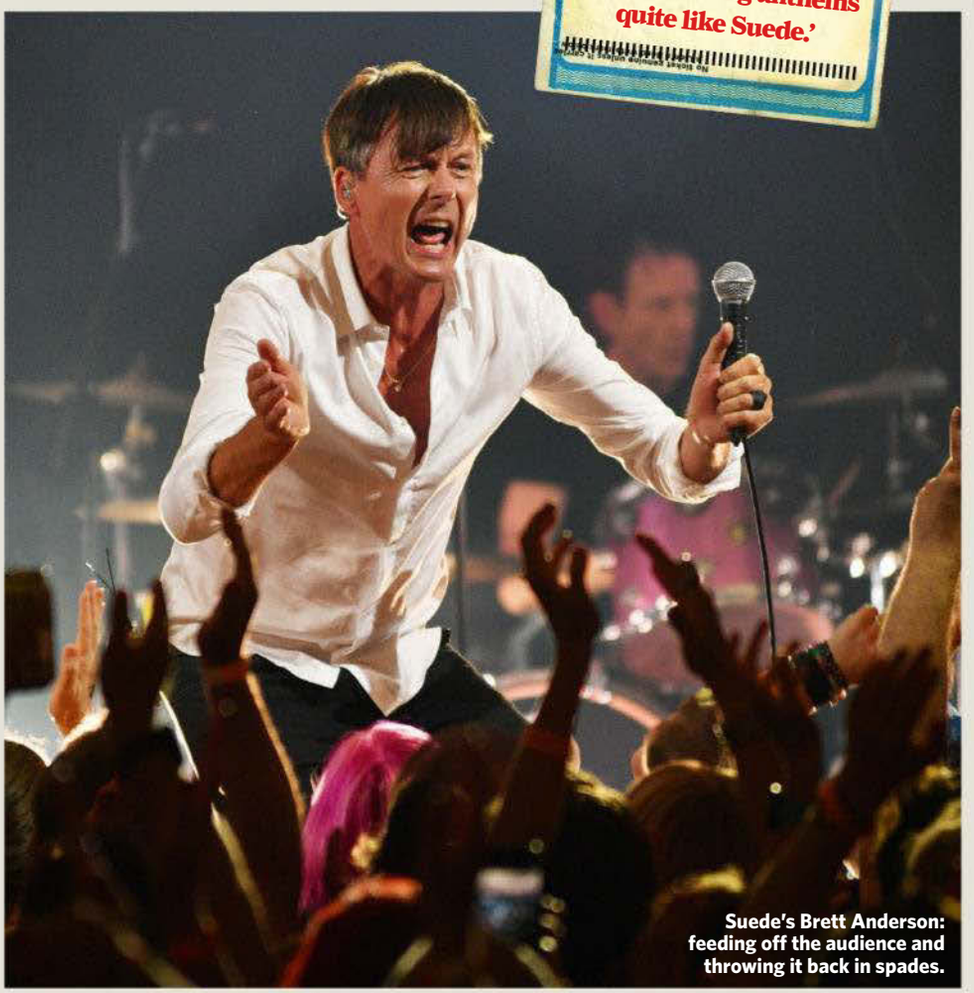
London Southbank Centre

Nineties icons present *Antidepressants* in-the-round.

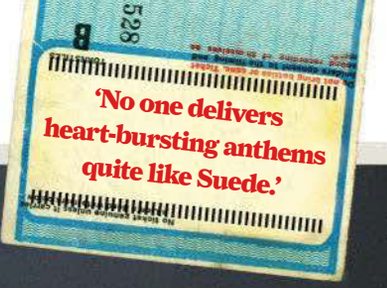
No one delivers heart-bursting anthems quite like Suede, and no one sells heart-bursting anthems quite like Brett Anderson. As a frontman he's astonishing. And if you've never seen Suede live you're forgiven for not believing me, because yes, it seems unlikely; he can broadcast a haughty, imperious demeanour when in fey off-duty repose, but put him in front of an audience and he's peerless. Anderson's never undersold a song in his life, and 30 years in there's no outward indication of any dip in his tireless commitment to delivering each show as if it were his last, and this intimate, in-the-round affair suits Brett's epic shtick perfectly.

Antidepressants (the astonishing peak-form-finding album Suede are debuting in full tonight) isn't out for a fortnight, yet the faithful (bafflingly) mouth all the words of *Broken Music For Broken People* and *Disintegrate* as Brett roars, soars and implores, persistently invading the dancefloor, sweating like a racehorse in a sauna, Bowie via Johnny Ray, the textbook matinee idol. With 11 ludicrously flawless songs nailed, the self-styled 'anti-nostalgia' band are back to deliver 10 appendices, all from their post-2010 re-formation oeuvre, and it's inarguable testament to their ongoing dependability that there's not a single cry of "Play some old" as their final ovation bursts eardrums. Miss them at your peril.

Ian Fortnam



Suede's Brett Anderson: feeding off the audience and throwing it back in spades.



Extreme / Massive Wagons

Birmingham O2 Academy

The headlining funk rockers are as reliable as the rising sun.

It doesn't matter if it's Birmingham on a Wednesday or a Friday night in Las Vegas, Extreme play every gig with the same sense of gleeful panache. That spirit is clearly shared by Massive Wagons, the Lancastrian rockers getting stuck into a short but oh-so-sweet set that packs in AC/DC stomp (*Missing On TV*), percussive bounding (*Fuck The Haters*) and even Leppard-balladry (*Night Skies*) in front of a packed Academy.

"It doesn't matter if we're playing a tiny club or a giant stadium, I always feel the same excitement," guitarist Nuno Bettencourt says from the stage.

It carries over into their set – early hits *It ('s A Monster)* and *Decadence Dance* are met with ecstatic shrieks as Gary Cherone struts the stage like a proud peacock in a sequined shirt. With plenty of solos and instrumental breaks there's an undeniable sense of performance to their show that is utterly magnetic and vanishingly rare in an era of backing 'tapes' and click tracks, and the sound of thousands of voices belting out *More Than Words* is enough to lift even the dourest spirit. By the time they close with a mega-Ozzy Osbourne medley (*I Don't Know/ Bark At The Moon/Crazy Train*) there's a sense of joyous rapture, the world outside forgotten for at least a few hours thanks to one of the finest rock'n'roll shows around.

Rich Hobson

Van Morrison

Belfast Waterfront Hall

Hometown birthday occasion with Ronnie Wood.

On this, the evening of Van Morrison's eightieth birthday, he steps out and sings *Into The Mystic*, that great evocation of soul and deliverance. An international fan base has flown in to join with the locals. The cheers are keen, and everyone hopes the veteran singer will revisit his big songs. But this is Morrison's party, so best not to assume much.

Still, he brings on some guests and sings from a songbook that spans 60 years. Chris Farlowe is a contemporary, and together they perform Dylan's *It's All Over Now Baby Blue*, to the arrangement that Morrison used during his days with Them, and the result is a sentimental win.

He entertains with some swing and some jump blues. His voice isn't so agile in the high register, but he's impressive on the deeper ones. A couple of songs from his current album are decent.

But the celebrations really begin when Ronnie Wood arrives. Van's *And It Stoned Me* is an invitation to messy fun and a majestic chorus line. Ronnie stays for Bo Diddley's *Who Do You Love* and *Mona*, steering home with Buddy Holly's *Not Fade Away*.

The popular Van songs are spread thinly, but he does finish with *Gloria*, that rumble-beat classic about pleasures after midnight. No party poppers, but a birthday well served.

Stuart Bailie

Dinosaur Pile-Up

Birmingham XOYO

Alt.rock prodigies make their prodigal comeback.

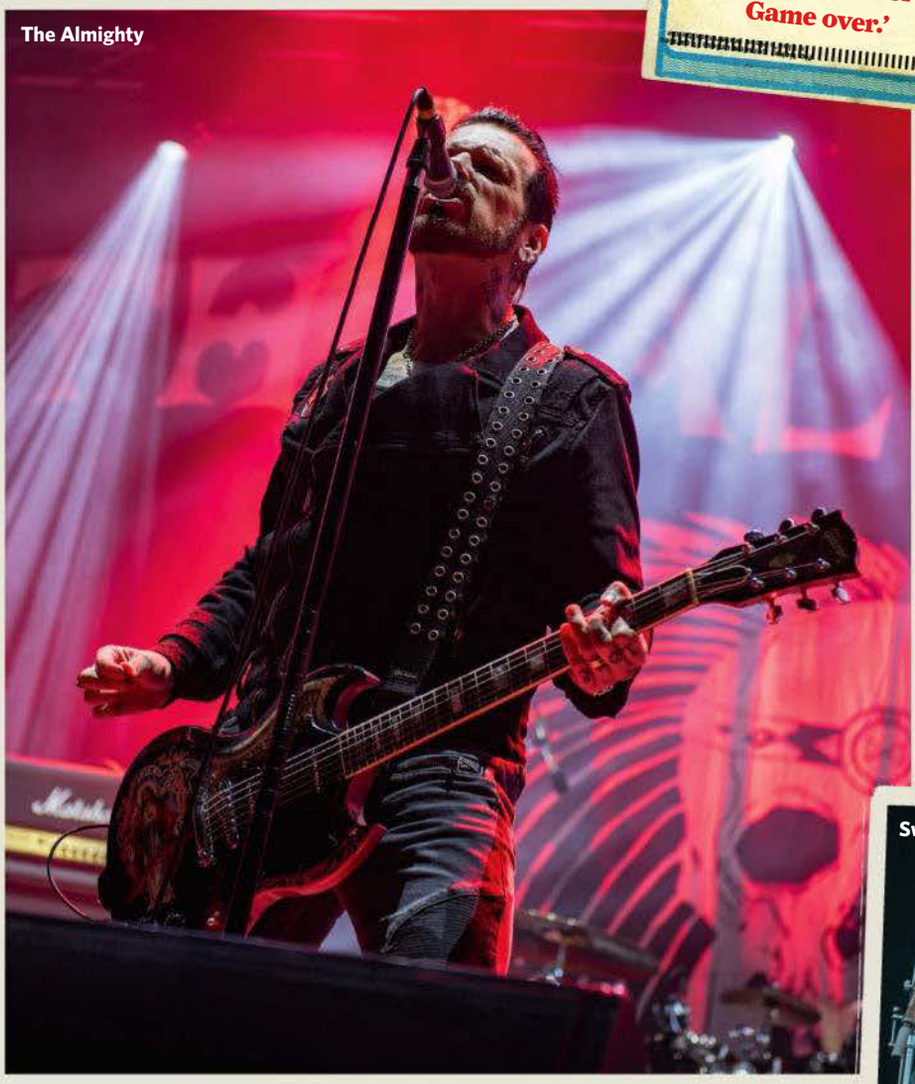
"We've had a tricky couple of years, so it's so fucking cool to be here." Four years after Dinosaur Pile-Up last toured the UK, there's an understandable nervous energy as they return to the stage. Granted, they haven't been *entirely* sidelined – they played Download and 2000Trees in 2023 – but guitarist/vocalist Matt Bigland's health issues meant things looked bleak for a while.

Not that you'd be able to tell from their new album *I've Felt Better*. A delightful synthesis of alt. rock, power-pop and punk, it picks up perfectly from the joyous anthemia of 2019's *Celebrity Mansions*. The band jump straight into album opener *'Bout To Lose It*, and the audience sing along with all the infectious enthusiasm these songs deserve, setting the tone for the rest of the set.

Singalongs to *Sick Of Being Down, Love's The Worst* and *My Way* hit with just as much gusto as older favourites *Peninsular* or *11:11*. And although there are a few stumbles, Bigland's guitar going wonky on *Love's*, it doesn't take away from the general sense of joy that comes with seeing the room packed out and zealously excited. A cover of Run-D.M.C.'s *It's Tricky* shows that the DPU magic can work on just about anything, but there's no substituting their own brand of joy, *Thrash Metal Cassette, Big Dogs* and *Back Foot*, tying a neat bow on a triumphant comeback.

Rich Hobson

JIM DYSON/GETTY IMAGES


The Almighty

The Dead Daisies

Sweet

'Sweet roll out banger after banger. Killer set. Game over.'

Stonedead Festival

Newark Showground

Sweet and The Almighty win the trad-rock celebration day.

Unlike some bigger festivals, the Stonedead crew know there's an audience out there for hard rock that doesn't pander to trends, and they deliver accordingly. So do the bands they book.

The audience has turned up in droves this year, and American melodic rockers **Tyketto** headline the Friday evening party to a crowd almost as large as on the festival day proper. They're great, but surprisingly don't play *Burning Down Inside*, the best song on their 1991 debut album, so points are docked!

The main day format sees four or five up-and-coming bands given the chance to play on a large stage and to an appreciative audience. Of those, South Wales riffmeisters **King Kraken** and German rockers **New Roses** make the biggest impact, but while not bad by a long shot, Sweden's **Enforcer** and Denmark's **Black Oak County** have some work to do.

German power metallers **Primal Fear** take everything terribly seriously, but they do have pedigree. Frontman Ralf Scheepers shone in Gamma Ray back in the 90s and almost replaced Rob Halford in Priest. They rock earnestly, but there's clearly not enough familiarity in the crowd for them to really make an impact. Unlike Danes **D-A-D**, who whip up a veritable storm that reminds you they really were contenders for a while with 1989's *No Fuel Left For The Pilgrims* album. Three of the four band members remain from those heady days, and it's no surprise they open with *Jihad* from that album and close with their trump card and its big hit, *I'm Sleeping My Day Away*, to rousing cheers. They know exactly what the crowd want, and deliver.

Slade's resurrection as a rock act at the 1980 Reading Festival is ingrained in music lore. Now Stonedead can stake their claim with **Sweet**. Too often overlooked as a curio in this country because guitarist Andy Scott is the only original member (despite the fact that fellow original bandmates have long-since departed this mortal coil). "I don't know about Stonedead, I'm not dead!" Scott states pithily at one point, as banger after banger are rolled out and the entire crowd rise in celebration. *Action*, *Hell Raiser*, *Set Me Free*, *Teenage Rampage*, *Love Is Like Oxygen*, *Fox OnThe Run*, *Blockbuster*, *Ballroom Blitz* and more. Killer set. Game over.

US rockers **The Dead Daises** have the advantage of the first impressive lighting as darkness falls, but do they have the songs? John Corabi is a great frontman, and Doug Aldrich and Tommy Clufetos can throw rock-star shapes, but only their own *I'm Gonna Ride* stands out and it's notable that the best songs they play are covers; the Sensational Alex Harvey Band's *Midnight Moses*, Creedence's *Fortunate Son* and The Beatles' *Helter Skelter*.

No such problems for headliners **The Almighty**. As with their 2024 reunion shows, tonight serves as a reminder of just how many great songs they have. It's no-frills, it's heads-down and it's on with business, the crowd hollering along to *Power* and *Full Force Lovin' Machine* with similar zip to Ricky Warwick. The grunge of *Addiction* and the raw punk of *Crank And Deceit* are a slight reminder that losing focus of who they really were didn't serve The Almighty too well in the 90s. But there's no point crying over spilt milk now and tonight they sound great. Not quite as good, though, as *Free And Easy* which closes the set, or the riotous encore closer *Wild & Wonderful*. A reminder of how great The Almighty really were and that, like some of their peers at the time, they were deserving of bigger and better things back in the day.

Jerry Ewing

MARK ELLIS

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Singer/guitarist **Devon Allman** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Rob Hughes**

In his more than 20-year recording career, singer/guitarist Devon Allman has turned his hand to many projects, ranging from blues rockers Honeytribe and supergroup Royal Southern Brotherhood, to the Allman Betts Band (continuing the legacy of his late father Gregg) and, most recently, an eclectic solo career. His latest release is *The Blues Summit*, a joyously collaborative album that finds Allman and his core band joined by, among others, Wet Willie frontman Jimmy Hall and the Memphis Horns.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

My first musical love was The Beatles' *Rubber Soul*, when I was four or five years old. For a very young boy, songs like *Girl* and *Norwegian Wood* sounded pretty exotic to my ears. The melodies were certainly enchanting. It just had a vibe that's stayed with me.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

I had a high-school garage band, playing punk music and rock. We called ourselves Idiosyncrasty. The first thing we ever played live must've been a Van Halen song, probably *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love*.

THE SINGER

This is super easy for me. My favourite singer of all time is Ray Charles. My grandmother used to play his music in the kitchen, so I had an early affinity for his voice. It was so pure and emotional. When I was a kid, I thought people like that were like gods.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

The Stones' *Sticky Fingers* is certainly up there, but I'll go for *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs* by Derek And The Dominos. It just sounds like a bunch of friends getting in the studio and pouring their hearts out. There's so much emotion and raw intensity. And it sounds effortless. It's pretty fantastic.

THE SONGWRITERS

That golden Stones era, from *Beggars Banquet* to *Goats Head Soup*, has so many magical studio moments. It's wild how those Jagger and Richards songs blended rock, blues, country and soul so convincingly. When I first started to write, and even with the Allman Betts Band, I leaned back on the Stones.

THE CULT HERO

I always put Liz Phair in that indie category, even though some of her later work was more polished. *Exile In Guyville* [1993 debut] is one of those rare records where I literally love every note. I thought she was way ahead of her time, and that record still sounds fresh to me.

THE BEST RECORD I'VE MADE

I stepped outside my comfort zone with *Miami Moon* [2024]. After a couple of albums with the Allman Betts Band, which is a certain framework musically, I really wanted to shake it up. I wanted some feelgood songs for the crowd, I wanted them to move their asses. It was supposed to be a fun, throwback-to-the-seventies kind of record.

THE WORST RECORD I'VE MADE

I think my first ever album with Honeytribe, *Torch* [2006], sounded pretty green. We were still trying to find our way. We were in a mad scramble to just have something to sell, and we threw it together pretty quickly. But it was a valuable lesson, because I requested a bigger budget for our next record.

THE GUITAR HERO

Jimi Hendrix, always. We actually cover *Little Wing* on the new album. David Gilmour is another big one for me. I love how he sounds, and it's very liquid-y. Listening to Pink Floyd's *Animals* is just transcendental. And there's a lot of soul in Gilmour's playing.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

Steely Dan is a massive guilty pleasure of mine. It feels like manufactured soul, but they did it so well. I'm a deep cuts guy, so stuff like *Show Biz Kids*, *Haitian Divorce*, *Green Earrings*, *Bodhisattva*...

MY 'IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE' SONG

You can never go wrong with Sade. I guess that would also qualify as a guilty pleasure. She's had the same band her whole career, and they're fantastic. *Your Love Is King*, *Smooth Operator*, *The Sweetest Taboo*, all that stuff is so great.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT PARTY SONG

Some good metal always gets me fired up – the first few records by Metallica or Iron Maiden. And there's some rap that I love: Dr. Dre's *The Chronic* or, more recently, Juice Wrld. That's some good pump-up music. But getting ready for a show, I'll be in the shower backstage with Steely Dan blasting.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

David Gray's *White Ladder* [1998] is a perfect bummed-out, rainy-day record. And also Jason Isbell's *Southeastern* [2013]. *Elephant*, in particular, just knocked my socks off. It's so heavy, yet somehow also kind of triumphant. It's like a direct hard line to the emotions.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

It'll have to be my favourite song of all time, which is Curtis Mayfield's *Move On Up*. I want everybody to just party down and celebrate the life, instead of bawling their eyes out. As a young child in the seventies I'd hear it on the radio, so it's also kind of nostalgic for me.

The Blues Summit is out now via Ruf Records.

"I had an early affinity for Ray Charles's voice. It was so pure and emotional."

DEVON ALLMAN: VENLA SHALIN/PRESS; RAY CHARLES: CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

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